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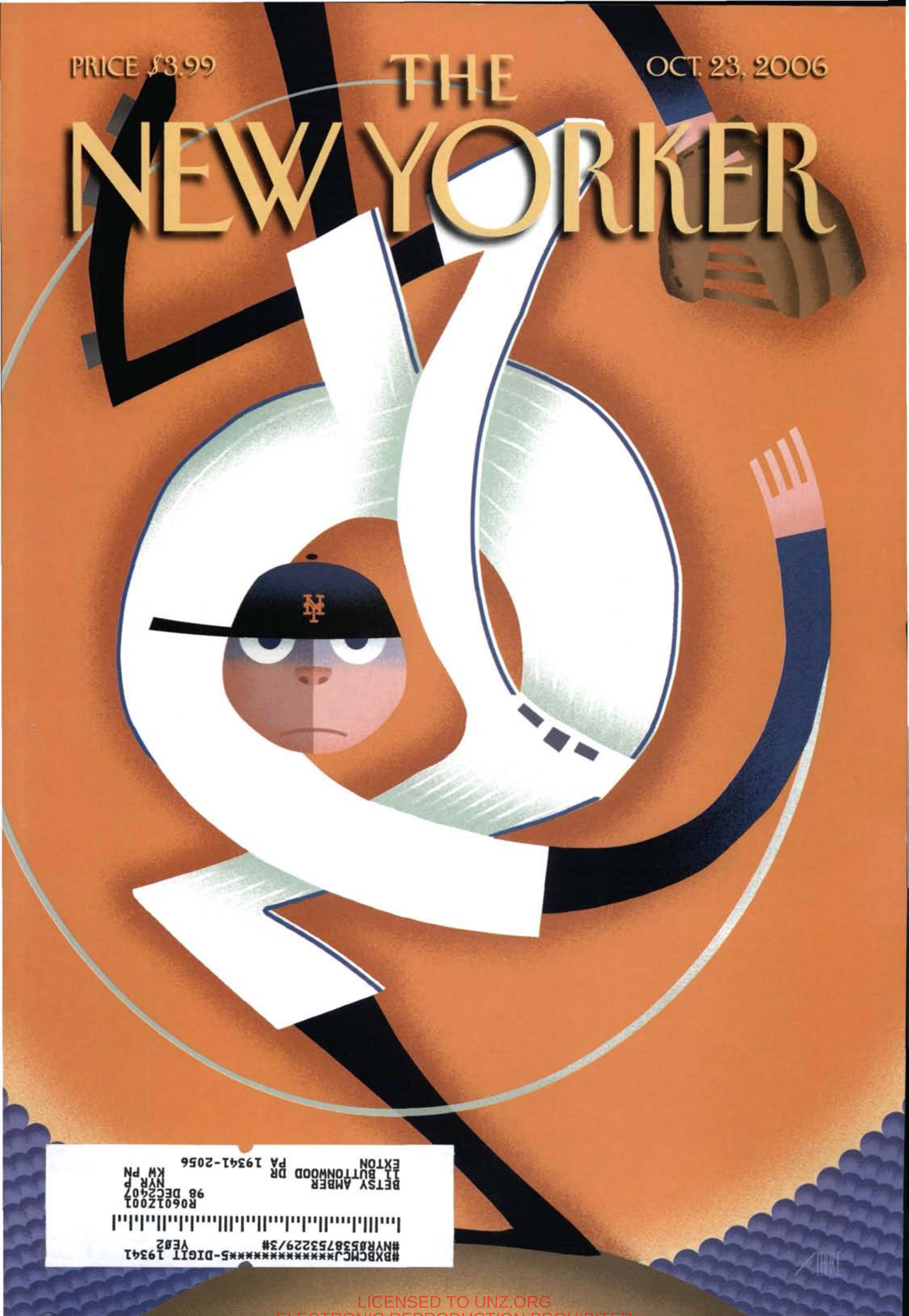
OCT. 23, 2006



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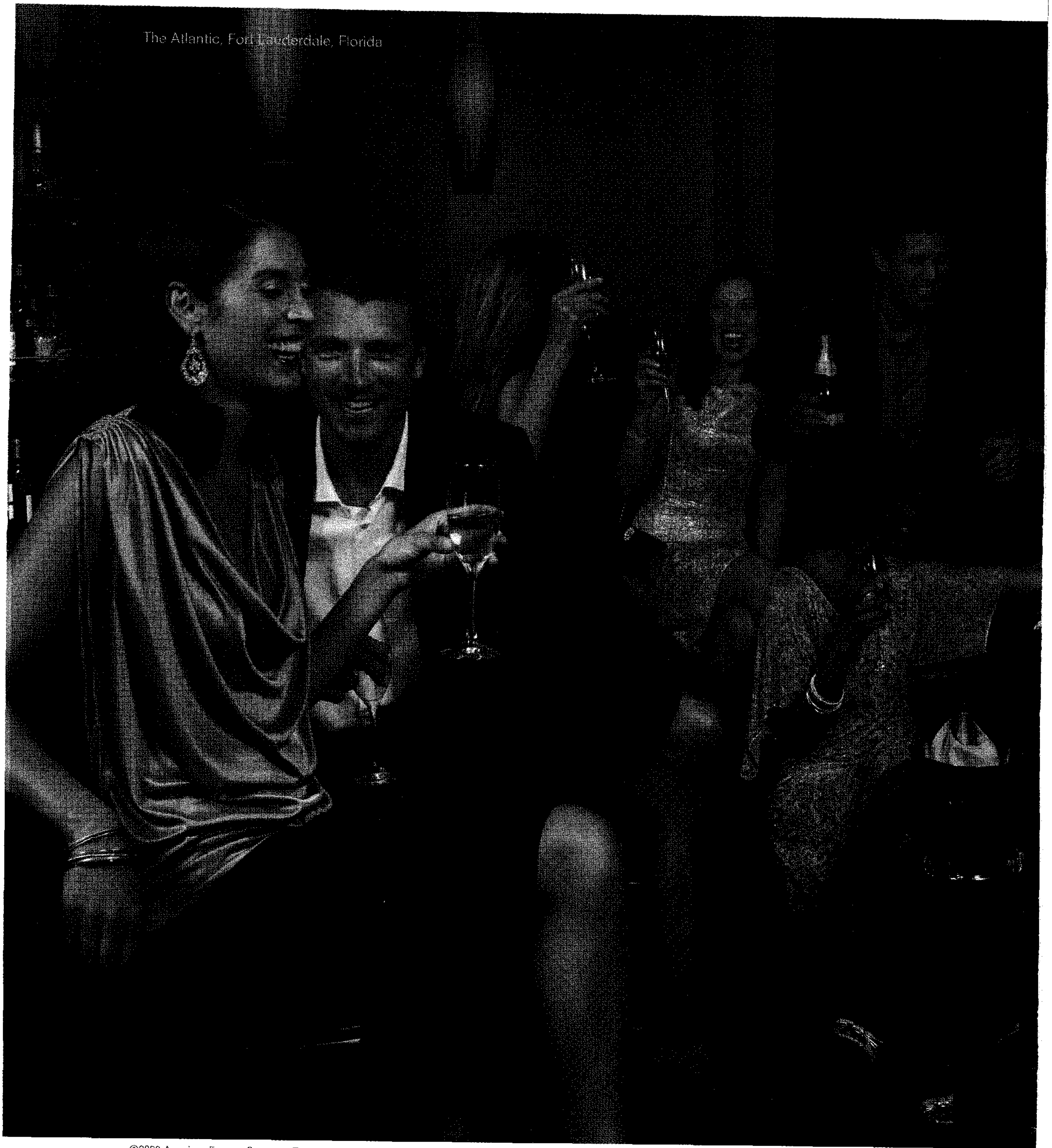
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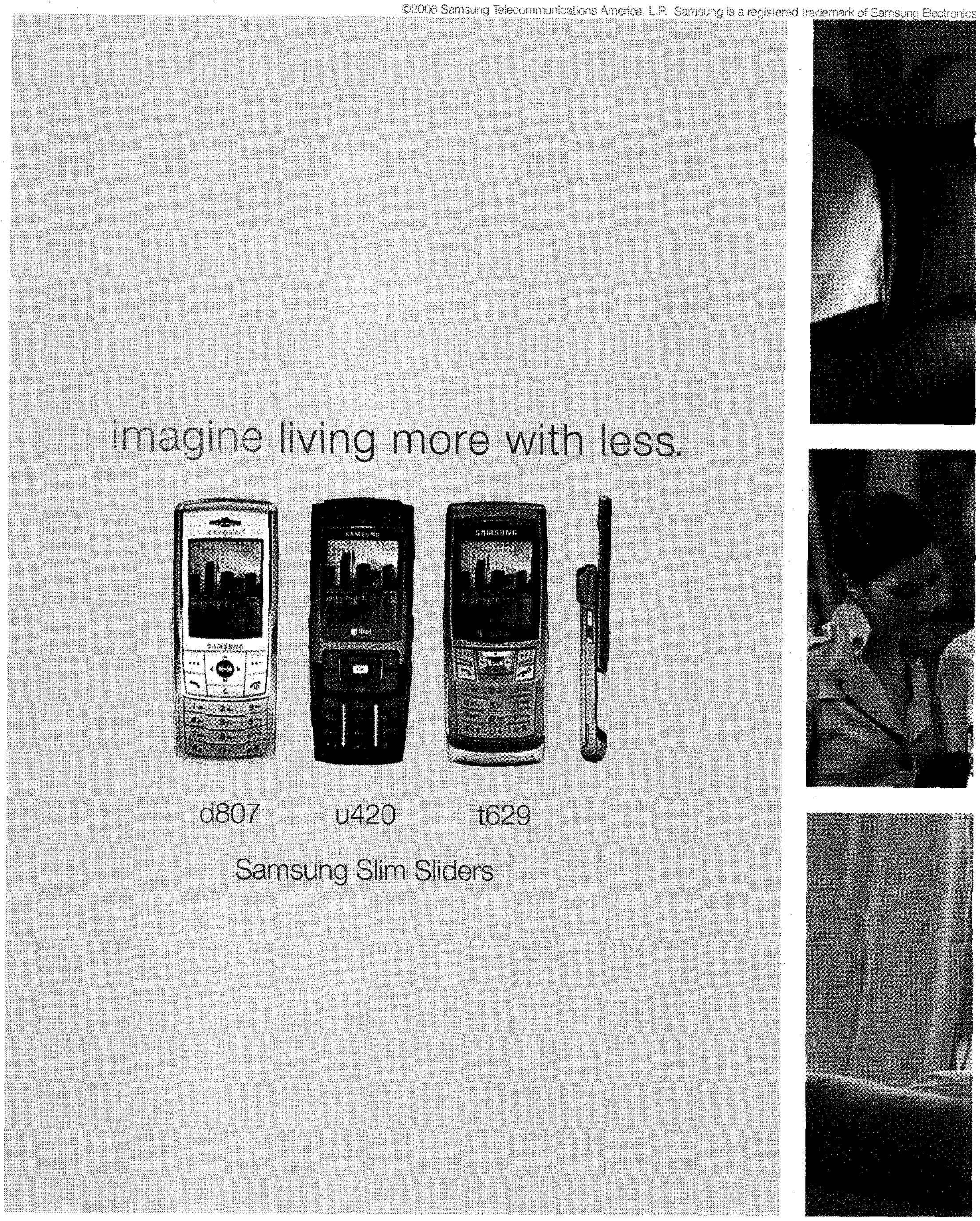
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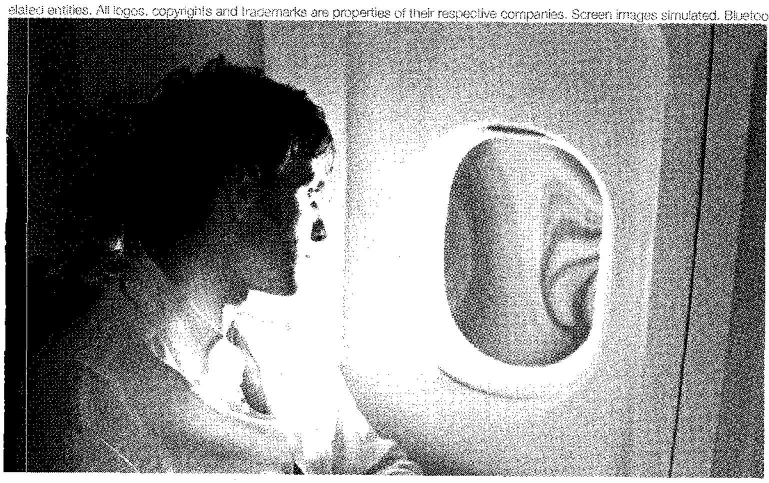

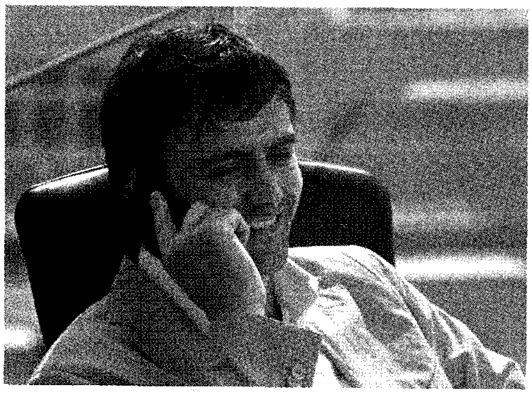

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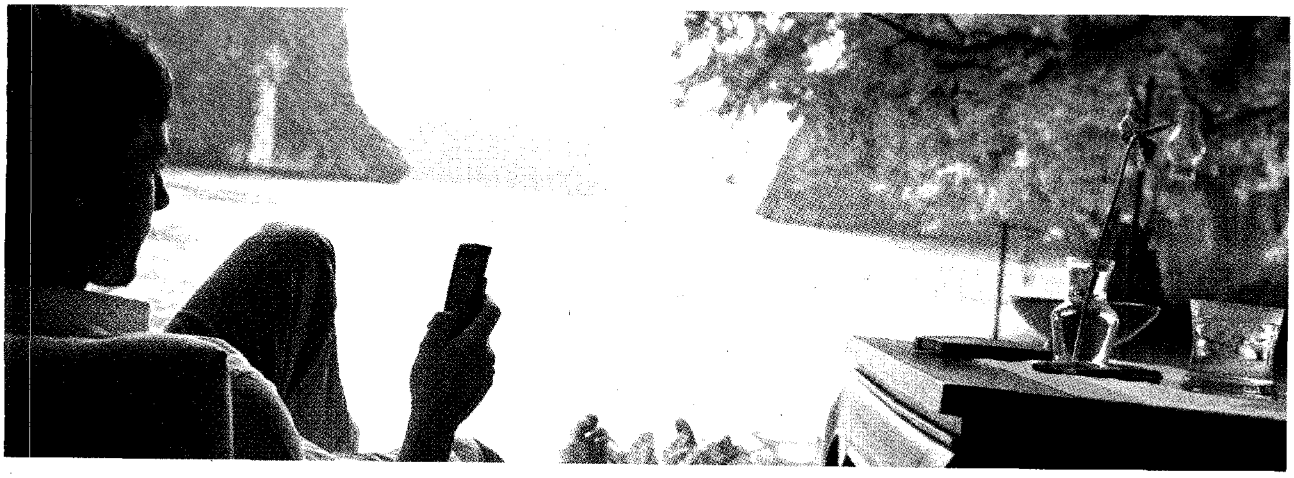

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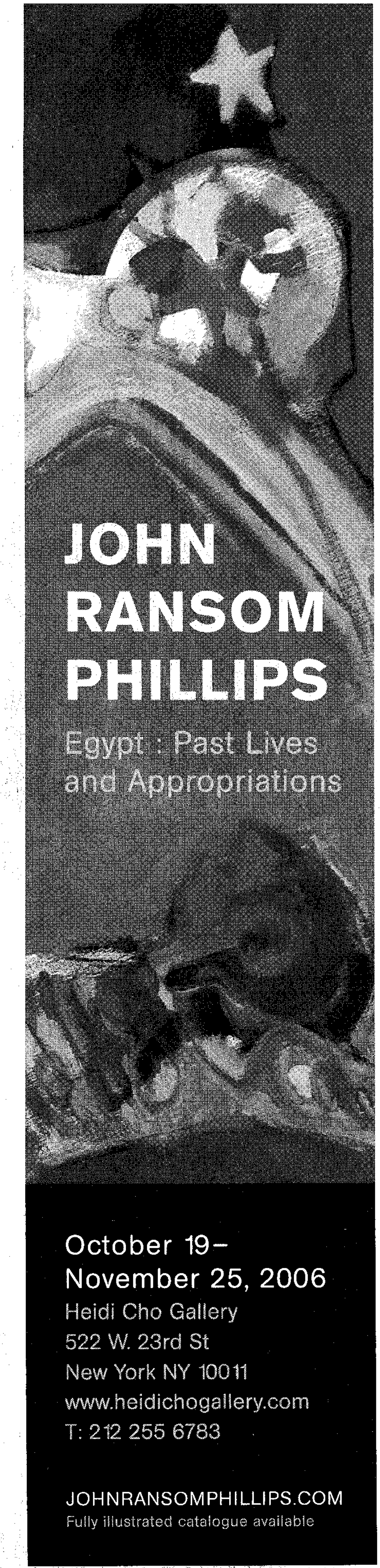

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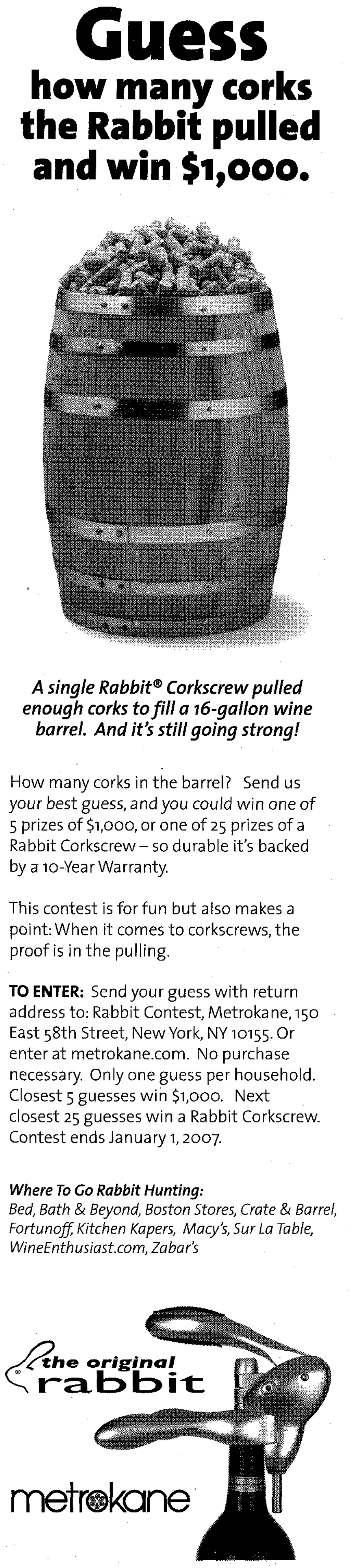
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CONTRIBUTORS

Adam Gopnik ("Rewriting Nature," p. 52) is the author of "Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York," which has just been published.

Steve Coll (Comment, p. 31) won a Pulitzer Prize for "Ghost Wars," a book about the C.I.A. and Afghanistan, which is available in paperback.

Dan Baum ("Arriba!," p. 36) is the author of "Citizen Coors: An American Dynasty."

Brad Leithauser (Poem, p. 42) will publish his fifth collection of poems, "Curves and Angles," next month.

Lauren Collins ("Mink Inc.," p. 46) is the deputy editor of The Talk of the Town.

Aleksandar Hemon (Fiction, p. 72) is the author of two works of fiction, "The Question of Bruno" and "Nowhere Man."

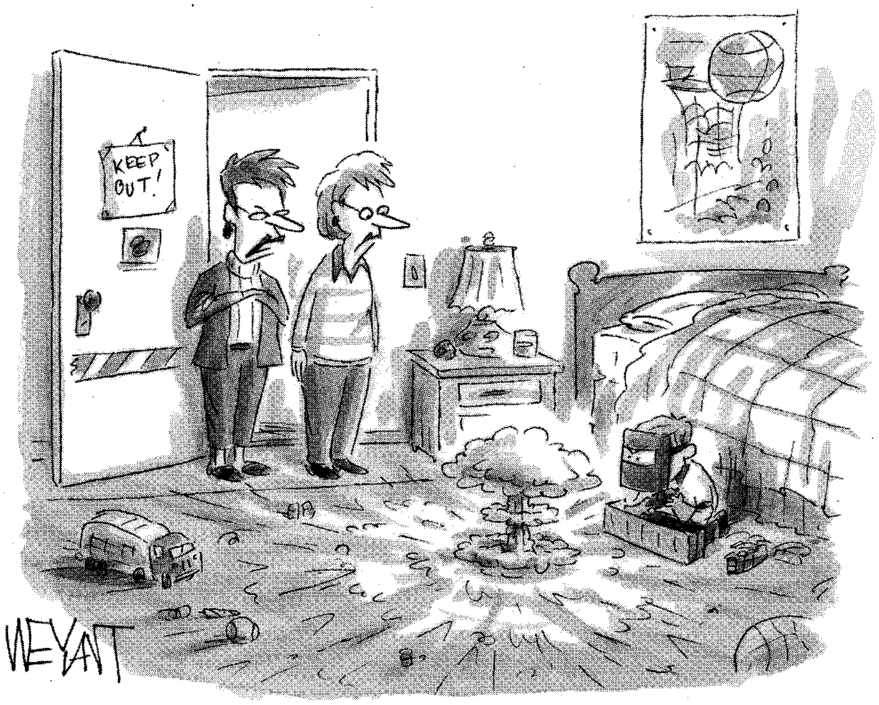
Michael Specter ("The Last Drop," p. 60) writes about science and public health for the magazine.

Anthony Grafton (Books, p. 82) teaches European history at Princeton. His books include "Defenders of the Text" and "Bring Out Your Dead."

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 90) reviews dance and books for the magazine. A collection of her essays, "Twenty-eight Artists and Two Saints," will be published in February.

Matthew Diffee (Cartoon, p. 54) edited "The Rejection Collection: Cartoons You Never Saw, and Never Will See, in *The New Yorker*," which came out this month.

Bob Staake (Cover), an illustrator, has two new children's books, "This Is Not a Pumpkin" and "Sputter, Sputter, Sput," coming out in the spring. ♦



"He's at that annoying age where they're always testing you."

THE MAIL

UNRAVELLING THE UNIVERSE

Jim Holt's analysis of Lee Smolin's and Peter Woit's cases against string theory is an engaging summary of a debate that has been raging in the physics community for more than a decade (A Critic at Large, October 2nd). Theoretical particle physics is probably the sexiest subfield of theoretical physics—often the only one that the public ever hears about—but it is only one of many active fields of study. Most theoretical physicists simply watch string theorists from a distance while continuing to produce important advances in their respective subfields. Some particle physicists may be banking everything on string theory, but the rest of us would be largely unaffected were it to fail. In fact, much of theoretical physics would be relatively unaffected even if string theory were to succeed. Physicists now understand that the behavior of the physical world on one scale is usually independent of the detailed laws governing physics on a smaller scale. So to suggest, as Holt does in his closing, that the discovery of a final theory of the microscopic world would bring an end to physics overlooks the richness of the subject and the diversity of contemporary theoretical physics research.

Miles Stoudenmire
Goleta, Calif.

Few scientific discoveries have the clarity or finality of a satisfying story arc. Subtlety and ambiguity don't make for a great story, but conflict often does. This might explain why Holt, and others reviewing Smolin's and Woit's books, present a distorted picture of a string theory war. The reality is that although all physicists know that string theory provides many frustratingly difficult problems and no one is sure of the best approach, string theorists continue to investigate new and promising possibilities, as do model builders, who work to find connections among the physical phenomena that are experimentally observed. New ideas with one approach might trigger excitement in another, and although the enthusiasm is sometimes premature and exaggerated, ideas are sorted out over time, and the good ones move forward. Although some string theorists think beauty is the ultimate arbiter of truth, most know better. String theory is probably far removed from experiment, but ideas that are essential to string theory, such as extra dimensions and supersymmetry, might well be within experimental reach when the Large Hadron Collider starts operating next year. All physicists eagerly await the discoveries that should take place there over the next few years.

Lisa Randall
Professor of Physics
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

FACT INTO FICTION

Joyce Carol Oates hews so closely to real-life events in her most recent story that for her to categorize it as fiction seems inaccurate (Fiction, October 9th). "Landfill" uses nearly the exact dates, times, descriptions, and scenarios from the traumatic story of John Fiocco, Jr., a nineteen-year-old College of New Jersey freshman who disappeared in the early morning of March 25, 2006, and whose body was found about a month later in a landfill. Oates's character, Hector Campos, Jr., a nineteen-year-old college freshman also named after his father, shares a fate far too strikingly similar to that of John Fiocco, Jr., to simply be coincidence. Oates could just as easily have created a fictional piece of her own, rather than incorporating such significant details wholesale from a well-known, real-life tragedy.

Mandee Wilton
Ringoes, N.J.

•

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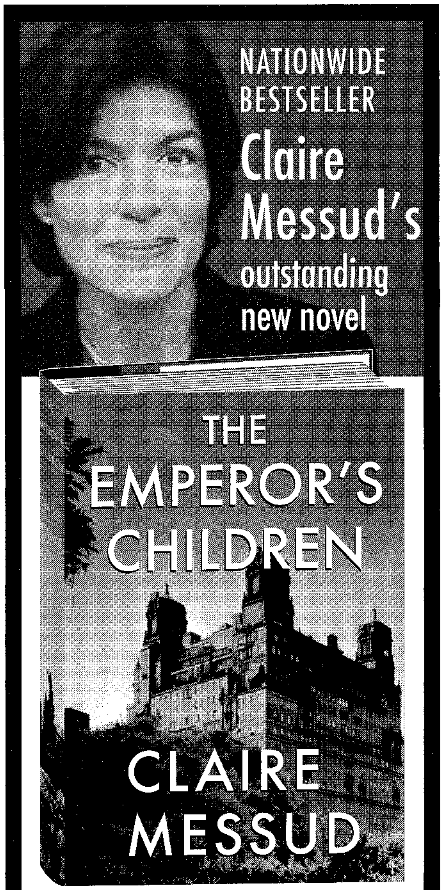

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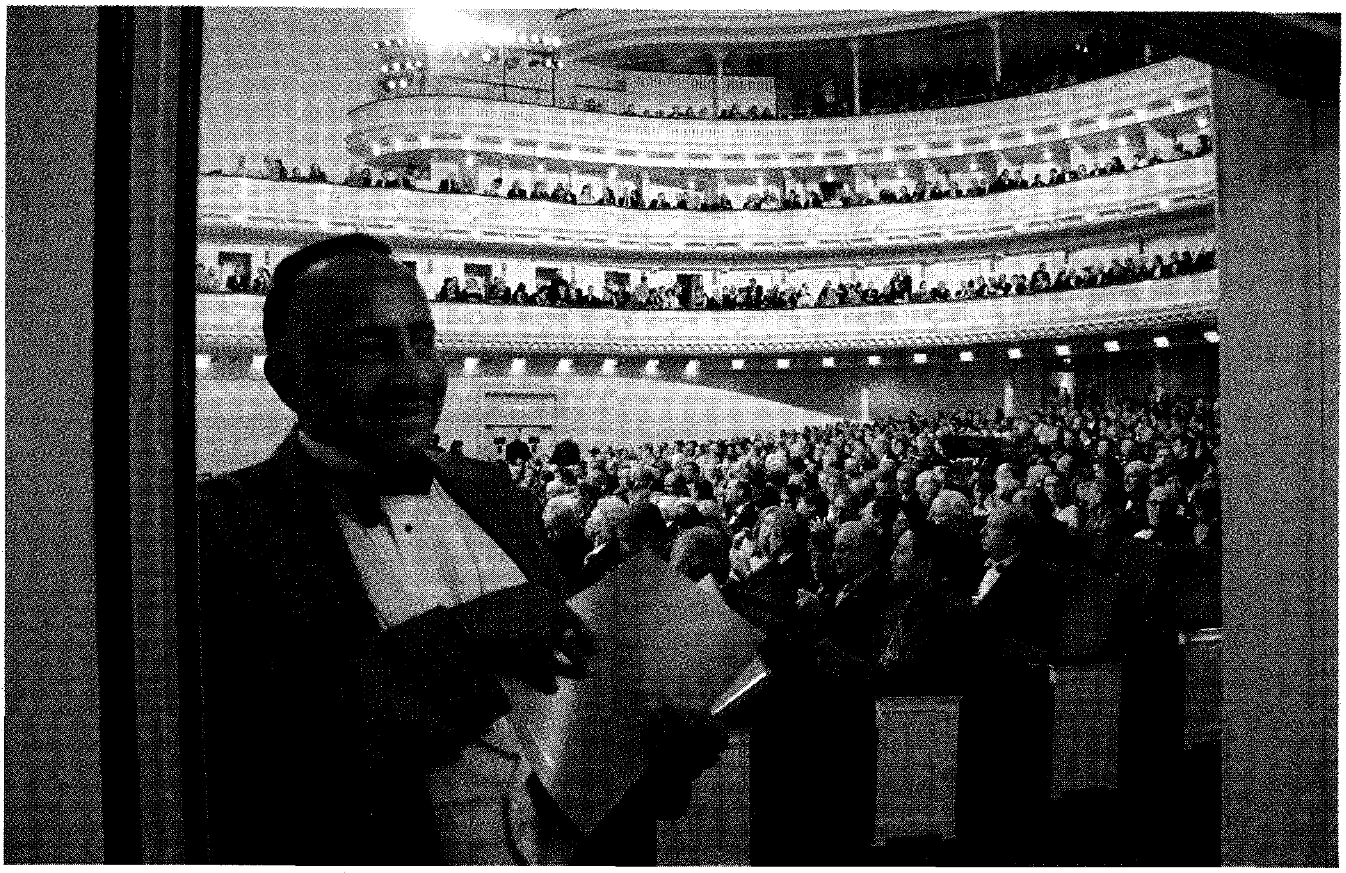


Carnegie Hall's season-opening gala. Photograph by Lauren Klaim Carton.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
22	23	24	18	19	20	21

THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE
BACK AND BLACK

Frank Black, the front man and principal songwriter of the Pixies, used the time after his band's breakup, in the early nineties, to become one of his generation's most prolific solo artists, releasing a dozen records in as many years, including this year's double album, "Fast Man Raider Man." The Pixies may have reunited onstage, but Black's focus is still on his solo career. This summer, he toured as an acoustic troubadour; he's back at Irving Plaza with a full band. (See page 12.)

ART
EYE-OPENING

It's easy to miss a group show in the fall, when dynamic solo shows dominate. But "Nothing and Everything," downtown at Peter Freeman, is an exceptionally smart example of the form; the artists include Vija Celmins, Piero Manzoni, Agnes Martin, and Hiroshi Sugimoto, among many others. (See page 16.)

DANCE
METAMORPHOSIS

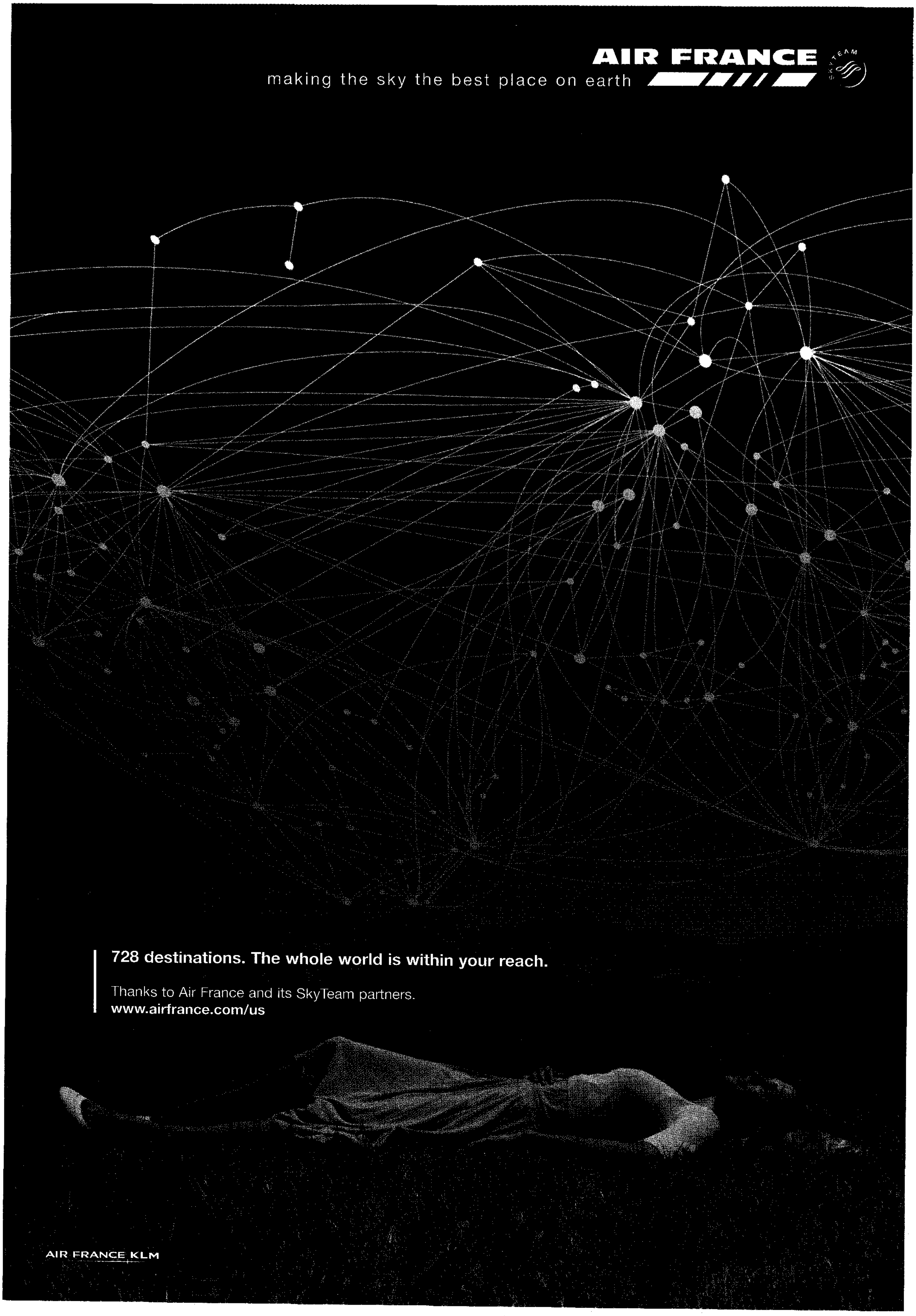
The Manchester-born, New York-based choreographer Sarah Michelson is something of a control freak, known for redesigning the spaces in which she performs. She continues her tradition of site-specific transformation with "Dogs," at BAM's Harvey Theatre. (See page 21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
NIGHT SHIFT

The Mostly Mozart Festival's series of late-night concerts at the Kaplan Penthouse has proved to be so popular that Lincoln Center is adapting the concept for the regular season. The pianist Anne-Marie McDermott leads off a trio of intimate Bach recitals with a performance of the Goldberg Variations. (See page 23.)

MOVIES
THE MAVEN

Donald Richie, a leading authority on the Japanese cinema and a filmmaker in his own right, arrived in Japan in 1947 and has been based there ever since. He will take part in Moving Image's program devoted to his films and his discoveries, which include a pair of classics by Yasujiro Ozu, "Tokyo Story" and "Late Spring." (See page 26.)



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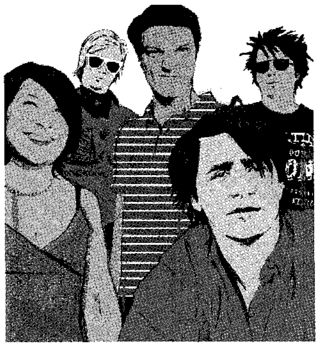
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BRUT FORCE

Eddie Argos, the leader of the London band Art Brut, likes to get right to the point. In a song about a brand-new girlfriend, he sings, "Got myself a brand-new girlfriend, so many messages to send, got myself a brand-new girlfriend." Another song, about forming his band, leaves equally little room for interpretation: "We formed a band, we formed a band, look at us, we formed a band." The bluntness carries through to the music, which is three-chord punk that would sound shamelessly retro if it weren't played with such unpretentious zeal. "We're going to write a song as universal as 'Happy Birthday,' " Argos declares on "Formed a Band." Art Brut has not made good on this pledge—at least not yet—but they have become universal in their own way. There are now numbered "franchise" bands that tour around playing only Art Brut songs, a practice that Art Brut actively encourages by linking to the groups from their Web site. The real Art Brut will perform at Irving Plaza on Oct. 19. Only time will tell if they're the best Art Brut. But they were certainly the first ones to the party.



RACHEL DOMM

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BHUTAN
Daisy Foote's drama portrays a New England family in the days following the death of its patriarch. Evan Yionoulis directs. Previews begin Oct. 19. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

BUTLEY
Nathan Lane stars as a literature professor with a personal crisis, in Simon Gray's dark comedy from 1972. Nicholas Martin directs. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CLEAN HOUSE
A new play by Sarah Ruhl, about a high-powered doctor (Blair Brown) whose housekeeper (Vanessa Aspillaga) prefers telling jokes to cleaning the apartment. With Jill Clayburgh. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART ONE: VOYAGE
The first of three plays by Tom Stoppard about a group of nineteenth-century Russian intellectuals, starring Ethan Hawke, Brían F. O'Byrne, Billy Crudup, Jennifer Ehle, Josh Hamilton, Martha Plimpton, and Amy Irving. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

EMERGENCE-SEE!
Daniel Beaty portrays forty characters in his new one-man play, in which a modern-day slave ship appears on the Hudson River in front of the Statue of Liberty. In previews. Opens Oct. 22. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

THE GIVEN
Michael Imperioli and Zetna Fuentes direct Francine Volpe's new drama, about a trio of friends living on the fringes of society. In previews. Opens Oct. 21. (Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

GREY GARDENS
Christine Ebersole and Mary Louise Wilson star in Doug Wright's musical based on the 1975 Maysles-brothers documentary about Edith Bouvier Beale and her daughter, Little Edie, the reclusive aunt and cousin of Jackie Kennedy. In previews. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARY POPPINS
The smash hit from London's West End comes to Broadway. Starring Ashley Brown as Mary Poppins and Gavin Lee as Bert; Richard Eyre directs. In previews. (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747.)

MIMI LE DUCK
Eartha Kitt is featured in a new musical, with book and lyrics by Diana Hansen-Young and music by Brian Feinstein, in which a Mormon housewife from Idaho leaves her successful QVC duck-painting business for Paris. In previews. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

LES MISÉRABLES
Alexander Gemignani plays Jean Valjean in a new production of the musical based on Victor Hugo's epic, set in nineteenth-century France. John Caird directs. Previews begin Oct. 24. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

POST MORTEM
The Flea presents the world première of a new comedy by A. R. Gurney, set at a faith-based university in the future. Jim Simpson directs. In previews. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

REGRETS ONLY
Manhattan Theatre Club presents the world première of a new comedy of manners by Paul Rudnick, about the social mores of a set of wealthy Manhattanites. Starring Christine Baranski and George Grizzard. Previews begin Oct. 19. (City Center, Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

A SMALL, MELODRAMATIC STORY
A Labyrinth Theatre Company production of a play by Stephen Belber, about a woman who falls for a cop with a past. Directed by Lucie Tiberghien. In previews. Opens Oct. 24. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

SOUTHERN COMFORTS
In Kathleen Clark's drama, at Primary Stages, a widow and a widower fall in love during their golden years. Opens Oct. 18. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER
Blythe Danner stars in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Tennessee Williams's psychological drama, about an aging widow trying to protect the reputation of her dead son. Mark Brokaw directs. Previews begin Oct. 20. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'
Twyla Tharp conceived, directed, and choreographed this jukebox musical set to the music of Bob Dylan. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

NOW PLAYING

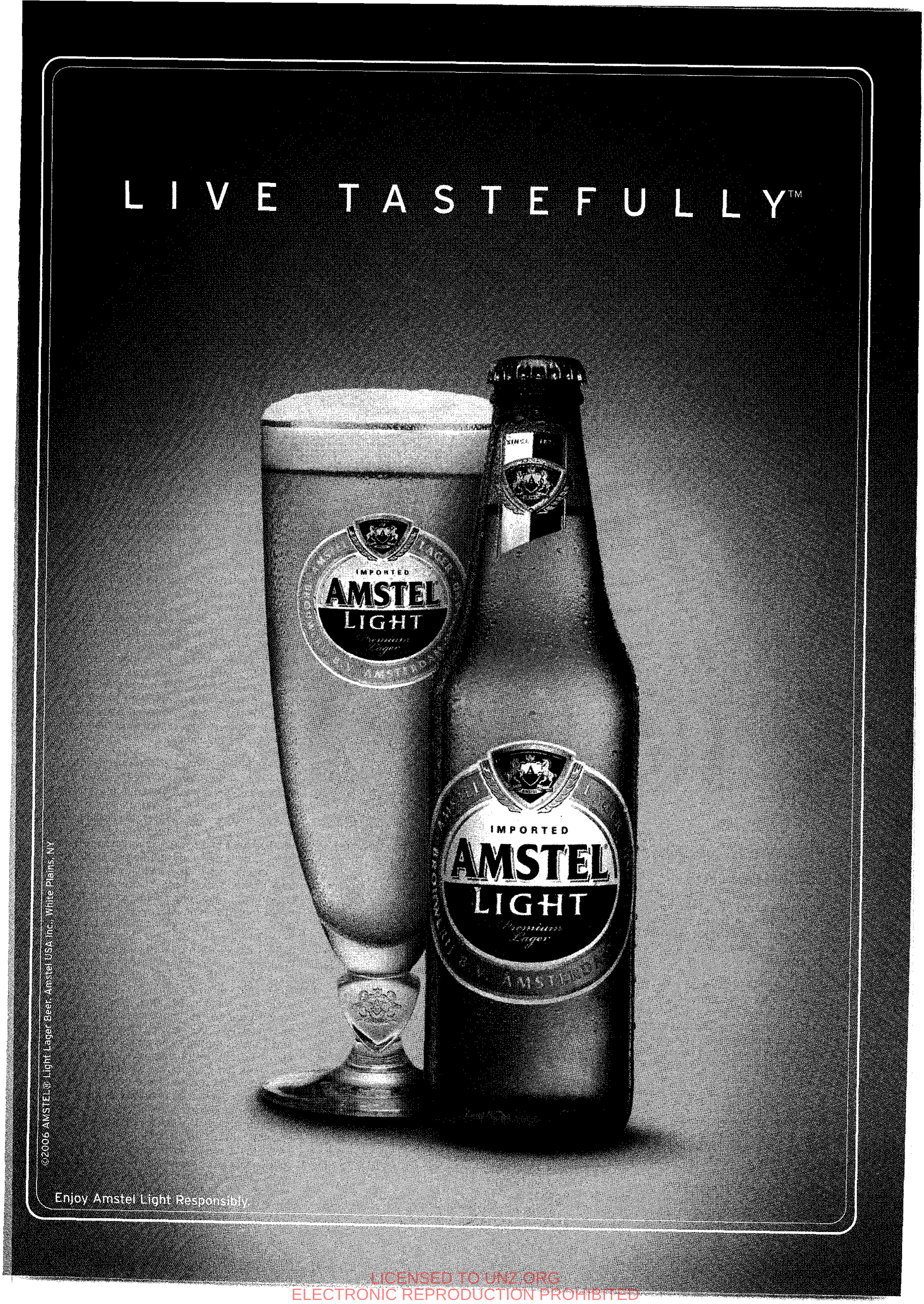
ARMS AND THE MAN
George Bernard Shaw called his 1894 farce an "anti-romantic comedy," for though the starry-eyed Raina (Rachel Botchan) gets her man—the enemy soldier Captain Bluntschli (Bradford Cover)—she loses her illusions. While the requisite cast of parents and fiancés puts obstacles in the lovers' path, Bluntschli, a pragmatic and surprisingly genial Swiss gun for hire, pours cold water on Raina's cherished visions of soldiers, battles, and herself; Shaw's own romantic notion is that she listens. Gus Kaikkonen's affable production concentrates on resurrecting the sparkling surface comedy, treading lightly when it comes to the play's melancholy underside. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

BIRTH AND AFTER BIRTH
Tina Howe's surreal play (in revival at the Atlantic Theatre Company, directed by Christian Parker) is a good idea almost entirely botched. Manic, child-obsessed parents, Bill (Jeff Binder) and Sandy (Maggie Kiley), prepare to surprise their four-year-old son, Nicky (the droll Jordan Gelber), who turns out to be balding, potbellied, and well over two hundred pounds. In Howe's hands, the child-as-adult reversal game becomes a familiar and exhausting exercise in sub-absurdist drama. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/16/06.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

A CHORUS LINE
In this thrilling revival, under the direction of Bob Avian—who co-choreographed the original with Michael Bennett, who also conceived and directed the show—twenty-four dancers auditioning for eight spots in a Broadway chorus stand in a lineup while the abrasive director, Zach (Michael Berresse), interrogates them from the stalls. Cassie (Charlotte d'Amboise), Zach's former lover, is a dancer who has risen from the ranks and now wants to return to the ensemble. In 1975, when the original production débuted on Broadway, Cassie's spiritual fatigue reflected the culture's nostalgia for a simpler, happier life, one undamaged by the nation's imperialism; the musical's sense of abdication is also what makes it so pertinent to the present, disillusioned generation. (10/16/06) (Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

¡EL CONQUISTADOR!
Thaddeus Phillips stars as the Chaplinesque schlemiel Polonio, a *telenovela*-loving farmer turned doorman, in this one-man show set largely in the lobby of a Bogotá apartment building. The luckless Polonio braves the video-intercom rants of bizarre tenants (played by Colombian *telenovela* stars) and confides his troubles to his houseplant. Occasionally, he walks out a door and reappears in a full-screen video, courtesy of a little media magic. But it's not the technological wizardry or the overreaching, poorly paced script (by Phillips and Tatiana Mallarino, who directed) that holds your attention; it's Phillips's uncanny performance, a form of clowning that suggests Roberto Benigni with the volume turned down to a plausible level. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through Oct. 22.)

HEARTBREAK HOUSE
Roundabout Theatre Company presents George Bernard Shaw's romantic drama from 1920. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)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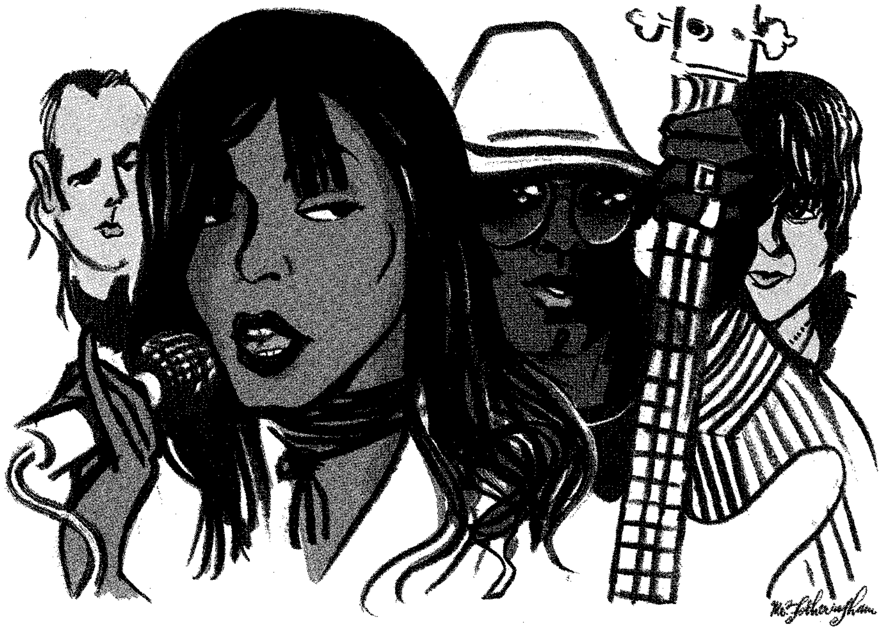
HELL HOUSE
Les Freres Corbusier enacts its version of the evangelical-Christian take on the haunted house, in which abortions and other sins alleged to damn one to Hell are portrayed. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

KING LEAR
In Alfred Preisser's quick-paced, dynamic adaptation, the cast is decked out in brilliant, flowing robes that bring to mind an Egyptian tableau. A sinuous drumbeat carries the action forward from the moment of Lear's decision to toss out his youngest daughter and divvy up the kingdom between her sisters, Goneril and Regan (played with finesse by Robyne Landiss Walker and Zainab Jah), to the mad climax on the heath. André De Shields creates a Lear who is recognizably callow as a father and a sovereign but also capable of mortal frailty, and Preisser manages to find the heat in a tragedy that can seem wintry in its devastation. (H.S.A., 647 St. Nicholas Ave. 212-868-4444.)

LOSING LOUIE
Matthew Arkin and Scott Cohen star in Simon Mendes da Costa's comedy, a portrait of two generations, fifty years apart. Jerry Zaks directs. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)



The Brand New Heavies start a national tour with a show at the Apollo Theatre.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE
The American première of a play created from the diaries and letters of the American activist, who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-307-4100.)

NIXON'S NIXON
Set on the night before Richard Nixon's resignation, Russell Lees's 1995 satire imagines the final late-night colloquy between the embattled President and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. They exchange reminiscences and impersonations of world leaders they have known, from Brezhnev to Golda Meir, while a self-pitying Nixon (Gerry Bamman) pleads with the wily Kissinger (Steve Mellor) to rescue him from the deepening political quicksand. Recent events in Washington have served to underscore the timeliness of Lees's grotesque political caricatures; you might wonder if, in the end, Nixon hasn't managed to have the last laugh. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE
Cynthia Nixon stars as an outspoken teacher in a Scottish girls' school in the nineteen-thirties, in this play adapted from the Muriel Spark novel, produced by the New Group. Scott Elliott directs. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE VOYAGE OF THE CARCASS
Dan O'Brien's farce about the three remaining members of a doomed Arctic expedition stars the Tony winner Dan Fogler. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

WRECKS
Ed Harris stars in the U.S. première of Neil LaBute's latest play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **JAY JOHNSON: THE TWO AND ONLY:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JOHN FERGUSON:** Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . . :** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **SONGS OF THE DRAGONS FLYING TO HEAVEN:** HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101. Through Oct. 20. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5300)—The British hip-hop outfit the **Brand New Heavies** came out of London's acid-jazz scene in the eighties with an accessible hybrid of soulful grooves and smooth funk. They had a number of R. & B. hits in the late eighties and early nineties, when their front woman was N'Dea Davenport, a lithe dynamo with a sensuous voice and an arresting presence. She left the group for a solo career after their 1994 album, "Brother Sister," but she recently reunited with them. The revamped Heavies have a new disk, "Get Used to It," and a tour of the U.S. starting here on Oct. 19.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Oct. 21: Hip-hop and jazz happily coexist in the music and mind of **Napoleon Maddox,** the vocalist, beat-boxer, and leader of the Cincinnati-based group IsWhat?! Expect improvisation and funk from a new trio made up of Maddox, providing human beat box and spoken word, the cellist **Nioka Workman** (the daughter of John Coltrane's bassist Reggie Workman), and the violinist **Yu Manabe.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oct. 23: The **Kooks** are the latest in a long succession of British bands to be touted as the best thing since sliced bread (or the Arctic Monkeys). In this case, though, the hype is justified. Their début album of gritty, shambolic rock and roll, "Inside In/Inside Out," has produced no fewer than five hit singles in the U.K.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Oct. 19: The young British band **Art Brut.** Oct. 23: The creative juggernaut behind the Pixies, **Frank Black** (a.k.a. Black Francis, a.k.a. Charles Thompson), and his endearingly square-pegged rock.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-570-3949)—Oct. 19: The sitarist and vocalist **Anoushka Shankar.** Oct. 20: The punk-rock icon **Patti Smith** travels uptown on the occasion of Arthur Rimbaud's birthday for a night of poetry and music.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—Oct. 18: The British electronic duo **Goldfrapp** kicked off the decade with the album "Felt Mountain," a collection of sensual, cinematic soundscapes that took the atmospheric moodiness of Massive Attack, Portishead, and other nineties trip-hop acts to its logical extreme. Three years later, on the release "Black Cherry," the pair shifted gears and started playing steamy synth pop. By the time their third disk, "Supernature," was released in the States, earlier this year, they were working to bridge the gap between the two earlier works. Oct. 21: These days, **Alice Cooper,** the seventies pioneer of shock rock, maintains a teetotalling, golf-club-swinging, churchgoing life style that owes more to Pat Boone than to Satan, but once upon a time he was a beer-sodden, face-painted, leather-clad rock pig who delighted kids and terrified parents. And given his penchant for snakes, dismembered baby dolls, and guillotines, there's no better time than late October for his old shtick.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Oct. 18: After more than a half-dozen live CDs, **Club d'Elf,** a Boston-based jam-band-like collective known for its deep, improvised fusion of North African grooves and avant-garde jazz, is releasing its first studio album, "Now I Understand." The leader and bassist, Mike Rivard, who counts electronic Miles Davis and Moroccan Berber music among his influences, will be joined by the core Club d'Elf members Erik Kerr, on drums, and Brahim Fribgane, on oud, plus special guests, including the keyboardist John Medeski, of Medeski Martin & Wood, and the guitarist Oren Bloedow, of Elysian Fields. Oct. 22: The **Theremin Orchestra** is the solo project of Pamelia Kurstin, a virtuoso (and key member of Barbez; see below) who layers waves of beautiful—and sometimes dissonant—improvised melodies to create a powerful orchestral effect. Also appearing is **Hope for Agoldensummer,** an almost impossibly warm quintet from Athens, Georgia, led by two sisters, Claire and Page Campbell, who sing intricate harmonies over slow waltz tempos, backed by a slide- and lap-guitar player and a drummer who occasionally rattles a case of old Coke bottles. The headliner is the Brooklyn-based ensemble **Barbez,** whose gothic cabaret takes listeners deep into the imaginary recesses of Eastern Europe.

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Oct. 19: **Veronika Povilioniene,** Lithuania's top folksinger, makes her first New York City appearance. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) Oct. 20: The **"Shomyo Chant for Peace"** concert features a group of Tendai Buddhist monks from Japan who practice a twelve-

hundred-year-old art form. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St.) Oct. 22: A Celtic fiddle festival with **Kevin Burke, Christian Lemaitre,** and **Andre Brunet.** (Symphony Space.) (For more information about all shows, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Oct. 18-21: **Regina Carter.** A heartfelt album, "I'll Be Seeing You: A Sentimental Journey," and a MacArthur fellowship have made this a banner year for the acclaimed violinist, whose music ranges freely from standards to classical- and pop-influenced material.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Oct. 17-22: The **Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Stars.** The great trumpeter has been gone for more than a decade, but the presence of some of his trusted associates, including **Slide Hampton, James Moody,** and **Roy Hargrove,** insures a virtuosic and lively take on Gillespie's inspired blend of bop, big band, and Latin music.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Oct. 17-28: **Jessica Molaskey,** the engaging singer and actress often heard in the company of her husband, John Pizzarelli, joins **Dave Frishberg,** the brilliant songwriter, pianist, and vocal stylist whose standards include "Peel Me a Grape" and "I'm Hip."

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Oct. 19-22: The master clarinettist **Eddie Daniels** celebrates his sixty-fifth birthday with the help of **Paquito D'Rivera** and **Ken Peplowski** (on opening night only); they'll be paying tribute to the music of Benny Goodman, Stan Getz, and Gary Burton. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Oct. 20-21: The "Singers Over Manhattan" series in the Allen Room presents the vocalist **Stephanie Jordan,** who will receive support from the quartet of **Wess (Warmdaddy) Anderson,** a vital saxophonist and star soloist for the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Oct. 17-18: Two veterans with experience in the free-jazz trenches of the sixties—the drummer **Andrew Cyrille** and the bassist **Henry Grimes**—are joined by the younger saxophonist **Bill McHenry.** Oct. 19-22: A virtuoso on both the acoustic and the electric bass, **John Patitucci** is also an ambitious composer who looks past the boundaries of traditional jazz. His trio consists of the guitarist **Adam Rogers** and the drummer **Brian Blade,** who has worked with Patitucci in Wayne Shorter's quartet.

NEW YORK CABARET CONVENTION
The Mabel Mercer Foundation celebrates the best of the supper-club circuit this week at Lincoln Center's Rose Theatre. **Klea Blackhurst, Ann Hampton Callaway, Barbara Carroll, Jeff Harnar, Andrea Marcovicci, Karen Mason, Mary Cleere Haran,** and many others are scheduled to appear. (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Oct. 16-20. For more information, visit www.mabelmercer.org.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 17-22: The **Jim Hall** trio. Some guitarists are bent on cramming together as many notes as possible. Hall plays the instrument with a jeweller's touch: a gorgeous chord here, a lyrical phrase there. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Carnegie Hall, 57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—On his new album, "African Tarantella: Dances with Duke," the vibraphonist **Stefon Harris** (here with his nonet on Oct. 18) puts an idiosyncratic yet respectful spin on Ellington compositions.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Cézanne to Picasso: Ambroise Vollard, Patron of the Avant-Garde."** The Parisian gallerist Vollard (1866-1939) was an early champion of Matisse, Bonnard, van Gogh, Gauguin, Derain, and many others; this unusually canted show comprises samples of the work that they made with his encouragement and patronage. The two giants of the show's title are represented with canvases from solo shows that Vollard mounted in 1895 and 1901, respectively. Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"New Orleans After the Flood: Photographs by Robert Polidori."** Through Dec. 10. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** Since April, the roof garden has been home to four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them is "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ Battered, decapitated kings, prophets, and apostles abound in **"Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture."** The survey includes some intact busts—notably late-Roman portraits in marble, and eerie polychromed-wood reliquaries, with compartments in the breast or the skull to contain a shard of bone or a lock of hair. Most of the heads on display, though, were severed from their context on the façades of cathedrals and in the courts of power by iconoclastic or revolutionary zealots. A side gallery describes state-of-the-art neutron-activation analysis, which allows scholars to determine the quarry from which a particular block of limestone came, and then to match that stone with architectural materials at a given site, thus suggesting likely homes for the free-floating faces. Through Feb. 19. ♦ **"Sean Scully: Wall of Light."** Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"Accordions and Harmonicas of the Nineteenth Century."** Through March 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Projects 83: Monika Sosnowska."** Sosnowska has torn a jagged gash between the museum's second and third levels for viewers to peer through, up into a white-walled space; the floor below is littered with plasticky shards. As an art work, "The Hole" is more a one-liner than a revolutionary gesture, but it's still fun to see Yoshio Taniguchi's precious über-modern temple punctured, just a tiny bit, for the sake of art. Through Nov. 27. ♦ **"New Photography 2006: Jonathan Monk, Barbara Probst, Jules Spinatsch."** Through Jan. 8. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—Two bodies of work by the Italian artist (1899-1968) best known for his slashed canvases are presented in **"Lucio Fontana: Venice/New York."** Through Jan. 21. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid."** Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Picasso and American Art."** Through Jan. 28. ♦ Like Sol LeWitts funked up to represent an age of overwhelming techno-competence, **Mark Grotjahn's** drawings are geometric and regular, but they still have room for gestural flourishes. Eight large works in pencil focus on a recurring, off-kilter double fan shape, which shoots from multiple points on a central spine. Two drawings anchor the room with a saturated palette of reds and yellows, while the rest experiment with various gray scales. The slight asymmetries, along with smirches, scuffs, and visible pencil lines, admit a bit of ghost into the machine, bending mathematical accuracy toward the psychedelic. Through Jan. 7. ♦ Works by Edward

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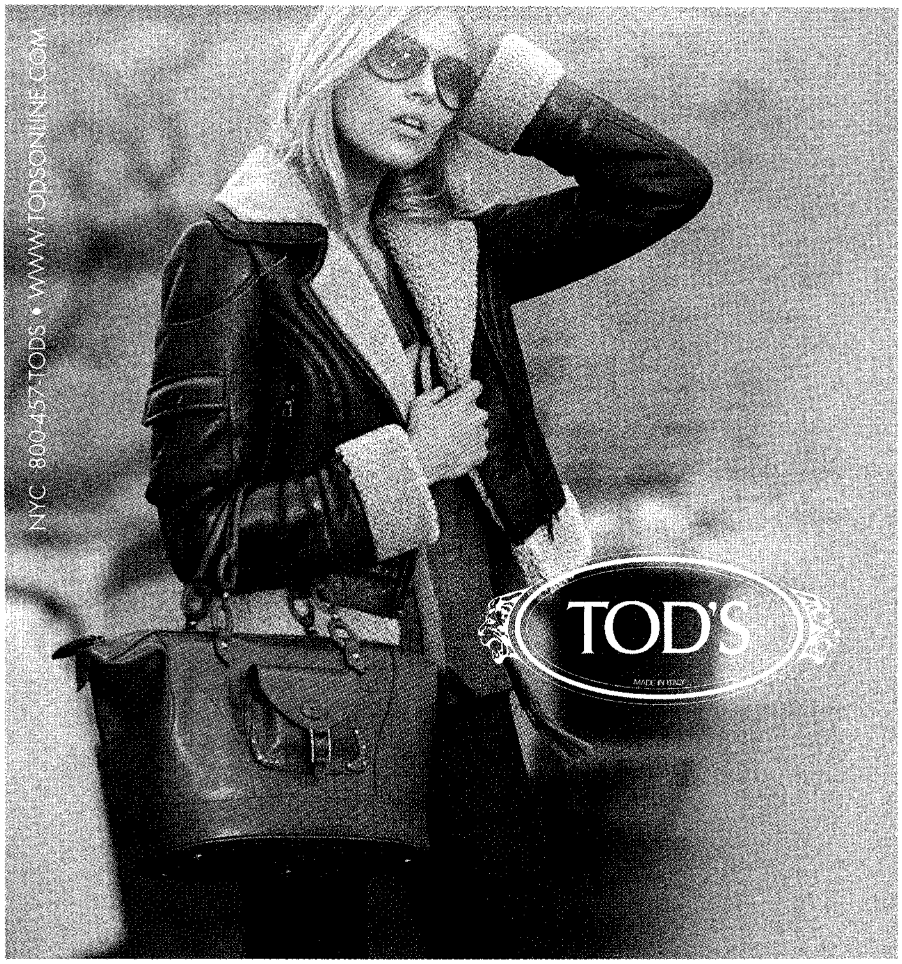

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Hopper fill the fifth floor, including his iconic "Nighthawks," on loan from the Art Institute of Chicago. Through Dec. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—The artists in **"One Way or Another: Asian American Art Now"** make reference to everything from Catholicism in the Philippines to the Western craze for chinoiserie, from the Vietnam War to immigration in Singapore, from Hindu mythology to Japanese flower arranging. Their approaches are similarly diverse: minimalist sculpture made out of colored Plexiglas; updated Persian miniatures depicting the "New World Order" of Bush et al.; photographs of Chinese restaurants in the American South. The eclecticism of such an exhibition might disappoint those looking for cohesive strains of "Asian-ness." On the other hand, the show strives to demonstrate ties to the Old Worlds from which this diaspora sprang, leaving out the work of artists whose identity and heritage are less superficially apparent in their work. Through Dec. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape"** tracks the contributions of the three painters in fostering appreciation for a variety of wonder sights: Niagara Falls, the Maine coast, Yellowstone, Yosemite. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005."** Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Italia! Muse to American Artists."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Luminist Horizons: The Art and Collection of James A. Suydam."** Suydam (1819-65) isn't as well known as contemporaries like Asher Durand, Frederic Edwin Church, and John F. Kensett (who was his mentor and friend), but his paintings and collection, bequeathed to the National Academy in 1865, tread similar ground. Majestic landscapes with moody skies and windswept beaches populated with tiny figures captured the imaginations of Luminists obsessed with notions of the artist as a solitary figure in the world. Their landscapes—like Suydam's paintings of Newport—depict locales that are both recognizable and, after more than a century and a half, utterly foreign. Suydam himself represents a recognizable type: the scion of a wealthy Dutch-American family who studied painting and also collected art, supporting the efforts of his talented, less solvent friends. Through Dec. 31. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"Nancy Rubins: MOMA and Airplane Parts 1995 that visited Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain 2002/2003 then visited Forte Belvedere in 2003 and is now at SculptureCenter."** Rubins is famous for constructing towering, precariously wired-together concatenations of salvaged airplane parts. As with any single, bravura gesture, the awe factor diminishes in proportion to its familiarity. But even if you've seen one of Rubins's works before, and especially if you haven't, her up-twisting, cyclonic assemblage—whose long and proliferating title recounts the venues at which previous versions of it have been installed—looks fantastic in the SculptureCenter's equally large and battered industrial space. An elegantly balanced post-crash dream, it aspires toward the daylight filtering in from windows set high in the rafters of the former streetcar barn. Walking underneath it prompts a nice pleasure-fear frisson. Through Nov. 18. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Quid Pro Quo,"** an exhibition of work by the museum's 2005-06 artists-in-residence: Rashawn Griffin, Karyn Olivier, and Clifford Owens. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Nadine Robinson: Alles Grau in Grau Malen."** Through Oct. 22. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

DAMIEN HIRST
This survey of drawings from 1981 to the present counters the notion that makers of conceptual art featuring large, dead beasts can't draw. Hirst's efforts range from competent studies of Delacroix and vanitas skulls—a portent to future obsessions, perhaps—to minimalist grids and installation schematics. One consistent element is his tendency toward bombast and obviously big ideas. Marginalia in one drawing toys with taking "several found everyday objects that could possibly represent the shape of the known/unknown universe at any point in time," while studies for a recent suite of works arrange sheep carcasses in compositions that re-create the Stations of the Cross. A note to self in one of these studies reminds the artist to have the "hooves cut off." Through Oct. 28. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313.)

NORBERT SCHWONTKOWSKI
This German painter has not exhibited in New York before, but he claims as special influences the Americans Forrest Bess, Philip Guston, and Alex Katz. (He also cites Pablo Picasso.) Schwontkowski's palette is grubby-neutral and his affect grimly whimsical—bare brown trees, glimmering dark waters, silvery vacant mirrors; even translucent butterflies appear as icons of gently ironic angst. Works by his four hero-interlocutors hang interspersed with Schwontkowski's own, adding another layer to the exhibition's title, "We Make Any Size of Mirror." Through Nov. 22. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400.)

MICHAEL SPANO
If Spano looks a bit conventional this time around, it's only because he's already made some of the most inventive photographs of the urban scene since Ray K. Metzker and Lee Friedlander staked their claims to the territory. Still, there's plenty of his trademark layering, disjunction, and sly wit in these big black-and-white pictures of people in their cars, and their straightforward framing can barely contain the chaos. In the best shots, drivers are seen in profile, focussed and oblivious but bombarded from all sides with billboards, signs, graffiti, reflections, and encroaching traffic. Security is an illusion, and the automobile has rarely looked so aggressive or so vulnerable. Through Nov. 4. (Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.)

Short List

ELINOR CARUCCI: Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-750-7070. Through Oct. 21. **SUSAN CRILE:** Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College, 68th St. at Lexington Ave. 212-772-4991. Through Oct. 21. **WALKER EVANS:** UBS, 1285 Sixth Ave., at 51st St. 212-713-2885. Through Nov. 17. **ANISH KAPOOR:** Rockefeller Center, Fifth Ave. at 50th St. For more information, see www.publicartfund.org. Through Oct. 27. **GIORGIO MORANDI:** Thiebaud, 42 E. 76th St. 212-737-9759. Through Oct. 28. **ABELARDO MORELL:** Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007. Through Dec. 2. **FRANZ ROH:** Ubu, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444. Through Dec. 22. **"HEROINES":** Arnold and Marie Schwartz Gallery, Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through May, 2007.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

KEEGAN MCHARGUE
Like folk art for virtual reality, McHargue's acrylic paintings feature naïvely rendered couples, seminude, multiracial, sometimes in flagrante delicto, always dronelike. They exist in a flat, hot-colored world of grids, tubes, vials, and plugs, where sunning by a pool, sitting in a cubicle, and lying in a hospital all elicit the same poses and affects. The show is called "The Control Group," and while many of its im-

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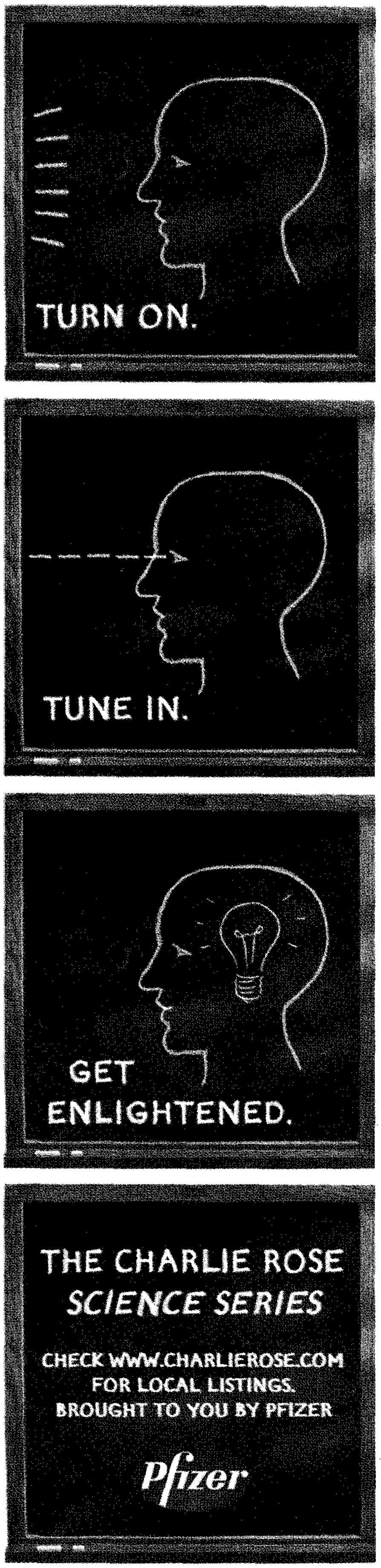

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ages would not look out of place on a child's picture puzzle, they would serve equally well as covers for sci-fi novels or a certain breed of upbeat techno album. Through Oct. 28. (Metro, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

BEAT STREULI

The Swiss photographer's work has varied little over the years, consisting mostly of large-scale color images of people picked out from the flux of the urban street. Because Streuli's subjects are unaware of his camera, his project suggests the intrusive intimacy of surveillance work. And since the focus of this three-screen video projection and room papered with larger-than-life mural photographs is a Muslim immigrant community in Brussels, the Big Brother factor is front and center. But, if Streuli's artless evenhandedness is too aloof to evoke we-are-the-world commonality, it's also casually curious and benign. On these streets, he knows, we are all the Other. Get used to it. Through Oct. 28. (Murray Guy, 453 W. 17th St. 212-463-7372.)

"OPEN WALLS #2" / SARAH ANNE LOBB

As the newest director of White Columns, Matthew Higgs has been credited with rejuvenating the city's oldest alternative space. To start this season, he's brought together a constellation of artists experimenting in every possible medium, including Aleksandra Mir, Steven Claydon, and Lisa Anne Auerbach. In the middle room, Gibb Slife scrambles the front pages of old newspapers and silk-screens them onto mirrors, creating new historical narratives. For Sarah Anne Lobb's solo in one of the back rooms, the Philadelphia-based artist takes playful leaps with nonrepresentational painting. Through Oct. 28. (320 W. 13th St. 212-924-4212.)

Short List

DONALD BAECHLER: Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Oct. 28. **BARNABY FURNAS:** Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889. Through Oct. 21. **JESPER JUST:** Rubenstein, 527 W. 23rd St. 212-627-8000. Through Oct. 28. **KAREN KILIMNIK:** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Through Nov. 4. **JOHN MILLER:** Metro, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100. Through Nov. 4. **ALBERT OEHLEN:** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 212-206-9100. Through Oct. 28. **KEN PRICE:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200. Through Nov. 4. **MATTHEW RITCHIE:** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through Oct. 28. **DARIO ROBLETO:** D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460. Through Oct. 28. **KAY ROSEN:** Lambert, 564 W. 25th St. 212-242-3611. Through Oct. 21. **CHRIS VERENE:** Kagan, 540 W. 29th St. 212-560-0670. Through Oct. 28. **"LEAST WANTED: A CENTURY OF AMERICAN MUGSHOTS":** Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through Oct. 28.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

HOLLY LYNTON

Exploring the possibilities for fantasy in her own back yard, Lynton turns it into a wild kingdom for a series of color photographs that assume the point of view of a playful and inquisitive child. Lynton's nearly naked little girl and a bare-chested friend take on a fairy-tale presence in a landscape rendered mysterious by worm's-eye-view closeups. He's a giant seen through a scrim of leaves; she's a sprite, crouching to catch a sprinkler's spray in her mouth. But some of the most intriguing images are unpopulated: a tunnel in the snow; a bird caught behind the netting on a raspberry bush; leaves, petals, dead bees, and dry ice floating in a plastic pool. Through Oct. 28. (Bekman, 6 Spring St. 212-219-0166.)

"NOTHING AND EVERYTHING"

The gallerists Peter Freeman and Jeffrey Fraenkel bring genuine intelligence, a discerning eye, and a slew of extraordinary pieces to this curatorial collaboration—surely the most elegant small show in town. They've invigorated Freeman's compact space with photographs, paintings, drawings, and sculpture by Robert Ryman, Diane Arbus, Gerhard Richter, Robert Gober, Adam Fuss, and more than thirty others, works that swing from minimalism to excess. The dialogue between Penn's ancient bubble gum, Dubuffet's earthy canvas, Rauschenberg's box of painted clay, and Yves Klein's scorched cardboard is especially inspired, but every scrap of this sparkling conversation deserves careful attention. Through Oct. 28. (560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-5154.)

TABLES FOR TWO
THE TASTING ROOM

264 Elizabeth St., between Houston and Prince Sts. (212-358-7831)—Until it relocated, this summer, the Tasting Room packed its small but fanatical following into an even smaller space, on First Street (eleven tables, no pantry or gas stove). The new dining room and bar seat ninety and are already filled with very earnest foodies—the kind who greet anyone unwitting enough to order something as banal as a cosmopolitan with curious, sidelong glances. (With the juice squeezed to order, cranberries would be tricky; also, it's not that sort of place.)

This is greenmarket cooking at its most improvisational. Colin Alevras, the chef and co-owner, builds each day's menu around what he finds at a farmer's market that morning. Should he determine that mushrooms are the thing, as he did on a recent Wednesday, he doesn't hold back: that night, four of seven starters and six of eight main dishes were built around them. (There was even fungus as dessert: club coral mushrooms with sheep's-milk yogurt, honey, and bee pollen.) If there is something manic about the menu planning, there is something equally fleeting about the results, and a particular dish may never reappear. In some cases, this is a blessing: a pile of raw matsutake-mushroom slices drizzled with "cheese-pumpkin juice" was earthy and dull. But other inventions succeed: a bistro-style offering of porcini topped with a fried egg and crispy pork skin was richly satisfying, and braised Montauk bluefish, served with an eggplant *romesco* sauce and crunchy slivers of crimson okra, was a triumph of contrasting textures. The dishes come in either "taste" (appetizer-size) or "share" (entrée-size) portions; tastes are the way to go. (One caveat: when your server suggests "coursing out" the tastes, it'll take a few hours.)

Colin's wife and co-owner, Renée, works the crowd most nights, discussing the food and especially the wine at great length. (The three-hundred-odd-bottle list is devoted to small American producers.) "That wine has a lot of gumption," she announced the other night, describing a Syrah from Knights Valley. So far, the food hasn't diverged wildly from that of the old space, but Renée seems downright giddy about the possibilities. "This week, we handled the meat from a whole cow," she said. "We've always dealt with smaller beasts, smaller ovens, smaller storage areas." (Open Tuesdays through Sundays for dinner. Entrées $16-$40.)

—*Kate Julian*

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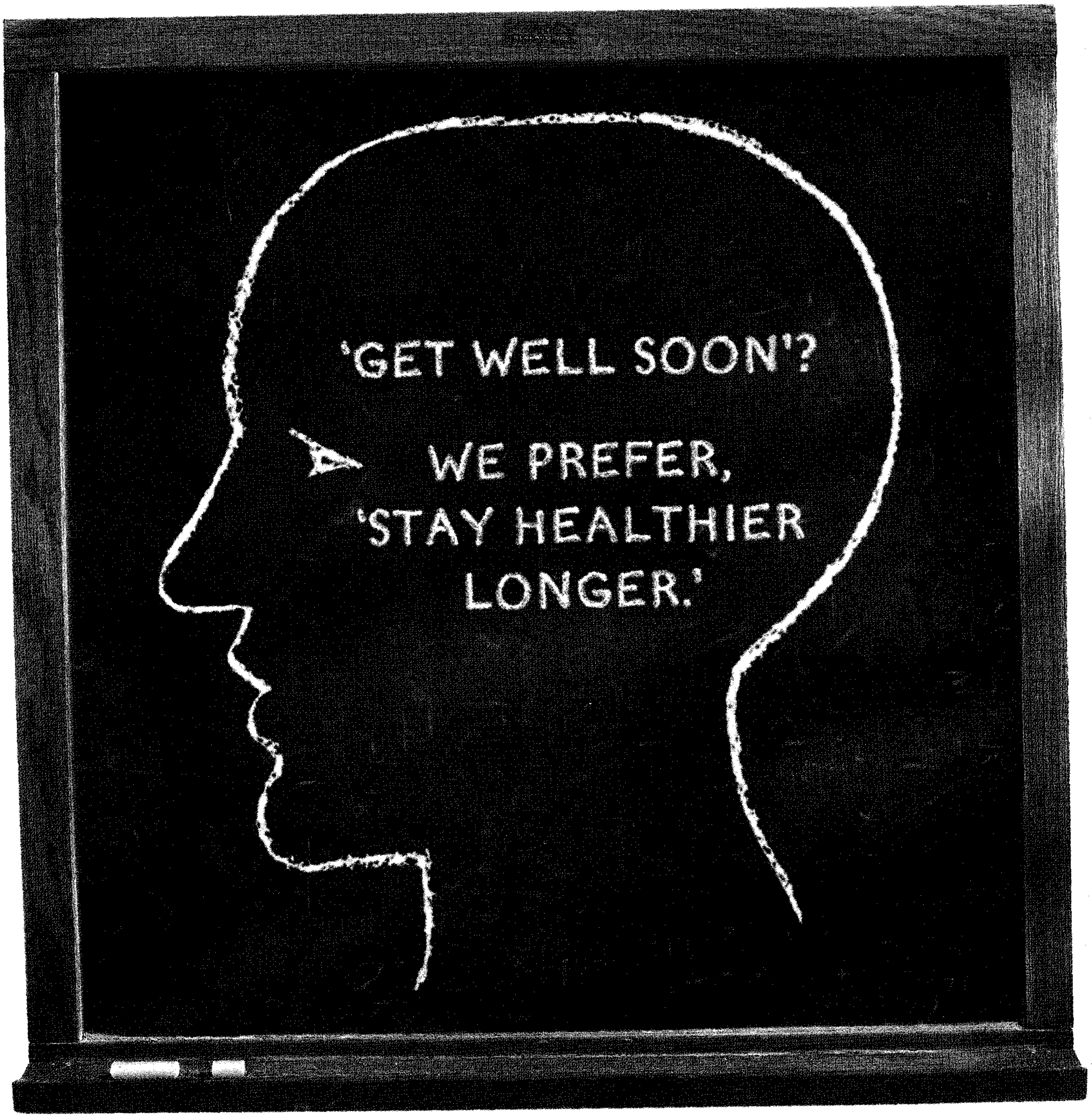

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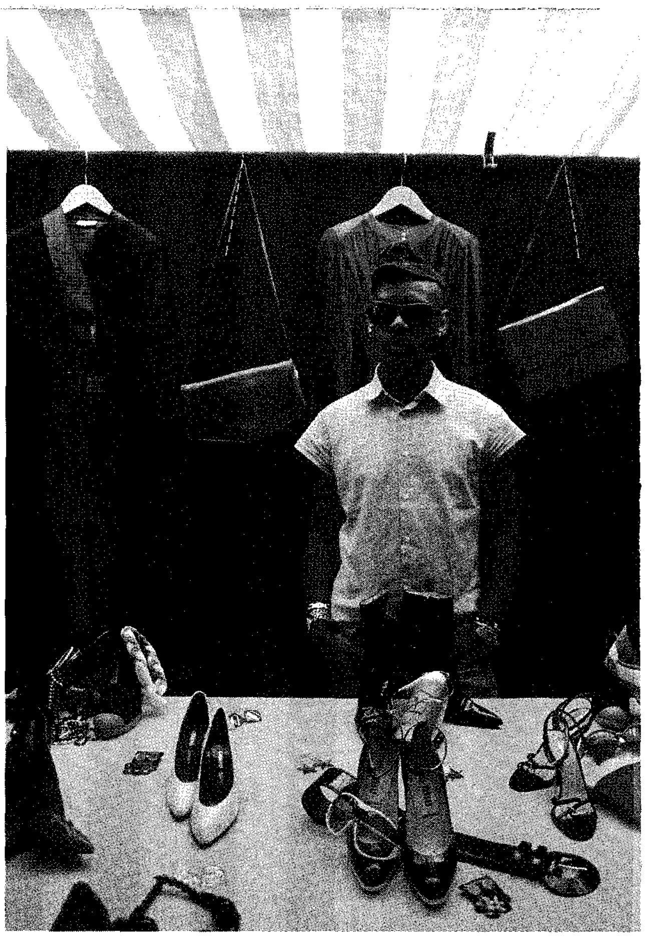
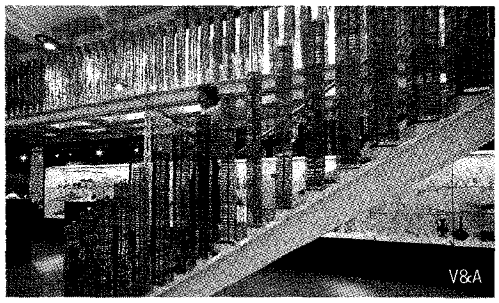
Designs on London

DO YOU KNOW YOUR STELLA MCCARTNEY FROM YOUR ALEXANDER MCQUEEN? CAN YOU TELL A LORD FOSTER DESIGN FROM A LORD ROGERS? OR DOES HOCKNEY AND HIRST SOUND LIKE A BAD TV COP SHOW TO YOU?



Where there is a pioneering trend in art, design, and fashion—don't be surprised to see London at the heart of it. Think mods and rockers from the sixties, to this year's skinny jeans, big bags, and even bigger belts. London has been the inspiration for designers and artists for centuries. So whether you're interested in shops and markets, architecture and design, museums and galleries, or bars and restaurants, you can guarantee London has something edgy and contemporary to offer.



London boasts some of the best modern art museums and galleries in the world and most of them are free to visit. The **Tate Modern** is the UK's national home of modern art and one of the city's most popular galleries. Housed in a former South Bank power station, the building itself is a monument to urban cool, with an outstanding collection of modern and contemporary art including major pieces by Dalí, Picasso, Rothko, and Warhol. The **Victoria and Albert Museum** (V&A) specializes in decorative art and design of the past and present, and its fashion-through-the-ages displays and special exhibitions are a must. Exploring excellence in every area of design from graphics and multimedia, to fashion and architecture, the **Design Museum** is at the forefront when it comes to new talent with exhibitions like Designer of the Year and Design Mart, which just opened recently. *For current information on exhibitions, see the* "What's On" *section of visitlondon.com.*

Hoxton and Shoreditch in ultra-trendy East London have cemented their place as the core of London's urban art scene in the last ten years with a steady stream of quirky and niche galleries continuing to open and thrive. Communities of young artists who live and socialize here keep the café, bar, and club scene fresh. **The Whitechapel Art Gallery** continues to develop its international reputation with innovative displays recognizing new talent at home and abroad. And situated in über cool Hoxton Square, **White Cube** offers an intimate gallery space with a full exhibition program throughout the year, while **Kemistry Gallery** is one of the only commercial graphic design-oriented galleries in London. If soaking up the arty vibe in a local bar is more your scene, then this area won't disappoint. There is a choice of hip bars in Hoxton Square alone, with places like **Bluu**, on the site of the former Blue Note Jazz Club; **Zigfrid**, which takes inspiration from counterculture icons; and **Trafik**, a chic and minimalist DJ bar. For those looking for classy cocktails with wow factor, there's the stunningly eclectic **Loungelover** bar. Head to the fashionably messy and mismatched **Vibe Bar** at Brick Lane's Old Truman Brewery for a more informal affair. *Go to the* "City Guide" *section of visitlondon.com for more suggestions on London nightlife.*

Some of the biggest names in fashion today such as McQueen, McCartney, Galliano, and Westwood have used London as a springboard before heading up major global fashion brands. For top name designer label flagship stores, head to **Bond Street**, **Sloane Street**, and **Knightsbridge**. Or, for the more budget conscious, the **Designer Warehouse Sales** outlet near Kings Cross holds sales throughout the year. For something more unique, a host of new designers have opened ultra-trendy boutiques in some of the city's less trodden areas. To find these newcomers, look in the neighborhoods of **Carnaby Street**, **Westbourne Grove**, and **Marylebone Village**. For a one-stop-shop, head straight for **Kingly Court**, for some of the hottest new talent. Even London's markets are brimming with style surprises, with the best fashion finds at **Camden**, **Spitalfields**, and **Portobello Road**.

IMAGES COURTESY OF VISIT LONDON

Events

Now through January 7th

- **DESIGN MART** Design Museum
  Dedicated to design and its evolution in the 20th and 21st centuries, the museum is showcasing work of up to eight emerging product and furniture designers in this annual event.

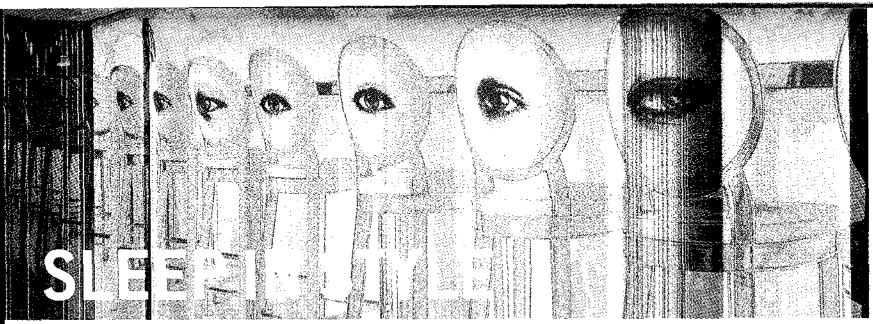
Now through January 14th

- **TURNER PRIZE EXHIBITION** Tate Britain
  The coveted Contemporary Art Turner Prize award has provoked much debate since its inception in 1984. Four artists have been short-listed for this year's prize to be awarded in December. Their work will be on display through mid-January.

Now through February 25th

- **"SIXTIES FASHION"** V& A Museum
  Exhibition exploring sixties fashion through the early seventies, linking it to London's different fashion districts and themes including Mary Quant in Chelsea, swinging Carnaby Street, and the rise of the boutique on King's Road.

Go to visitlondon.com for more London events.



SLEEP IN STYLE

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SANDERSON. A lavish "Urban Spa" hotel in the heart of London's West End, the landmark fifties building has been transformed by Philippe Starck into a surreal Cocteau-like dream world. Sanderson's dramatic eighty-foot onyx Long Bar is the ultimate communal table for sipping cocktails. Or retreat to the private Courtyard Garden, a lush open-air oasis with trees, fountains, and a reflecting pool. *"Sleep in Style" Special Offer from 11/30–4/16/07: Rates from $423 USD include English breakfast and upgrade to deluxe room. Call 800-606-6090 to book, or visit morganshotelgroup.com using promo code "LON." Reservations must be confirmed by 11/30/06; VAT taxes not included. Subject to availability.*

K WEST HOTEL & SPA. One of London's hippest hotels in Shepherd's Bush, K West attracts many design and media industry types as an ideal place to relax and unwind. Its modern glass exterior allows light to stream into the lobby and open-plan K Lounge area. Bedrooms feature luxurious leather, dark wood, and suede juxtaposed to stainless steel and sandblasted glass. Its K Spa has a Jacuzzi, eucalyptus steam room, sauna, and gym. *"Visit London" Special Offer for travel through 5/31/07. Deluxe Room rate: $243; Executive Room rate: $300 USD. Bookings must be made at bookit@k-west.co.uk by 12/17/06. Does not include VAT taxes and applies to room only. Subject to availability.*

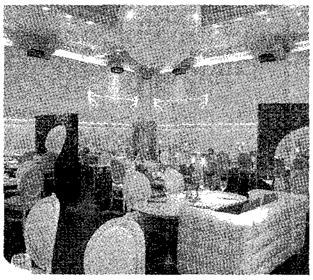
ST GREGORY HOTEL. In the heart of trendy Shoreditch, the contemporary hotel is one of London's newest and most exciting. Combining comfort with modern facilities, it boasts 196 stylish rooms, and features a rooftop restaurant, relaxing cocktail lounge, and a fitness suite making it the ideal place to stay when sampling Shoreditch and Hoxton's culture and nightlife.

Eat and Drink in Style

LOUNGELOVER

1 Whitby Street

This beautifully eccentric lounge bar has already taken the London fashion set by storm. On the site of a former meatpacking factory close to Brick Lane, the lounge is filled with gorgeous clutter that's grandly opulent with flamboyant sofas, giant champagne glasses brimming with flowers, and surreal artwork. Cocktails are suitably impressive—from the Love Letter with elderflower cordial and Citadelle raspberry vodka, to the Original Sin with green apple and Sputnik Russian vodka. Bar-food menu includes Sturgeon caviar as well as more usual fare.



SKETCH

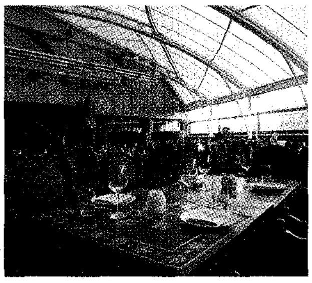
9 Conduit Street

A unique "gastrodome" of four restaurants on two floors in a converted 18th-century site, Sketch has become a magnet for the media, fashion, and style crowd. A video gallery by day, the Gallery becomes a trendy brasserie by night that serves dinner. The Lecture Room & Library offers fine dining and represents the epitome of the Sketch food experience. The Glade is a new casual daytime restaurant, and the Parlour is perfect for breakfast and afternoon tea. Eclectic international cuisine is conceived by three-Michelin-star French master chef, Pierre Gagnaire.

HOMAGE

The Waldorf Hilton

Inspired by the grand cafés of Europe, this fashionable restaurant has Louis XVI-style décor with chandeliers and leather banquets. Including the Grand Salon restaurant-café, a patisserie, and a bar, Homage is open from early morning to late at night. Modern art is on display by Bruce McLean, John Hoyland, and Martin Fuller, as well as work of developing artists. With a classic menu of casual and robust dishes from Head Chef Gerry Rae, formerly of Boxwood Café and Banquette, Homage incorporates many European favorites.



GILGAMESH

The Stables Camden Market

The biggest restaurant, bar, and lounge in London, Gilgamesh is situated in the heart of funky Camden Town. It is an ostentatious replica of a Babylonian palace boasting custom-designed, hand-carved furniture on an epic scale with a lapis stone bar—the longest in Europe. The restaurant has floor-to-ceiling windows and a forty-foot ceiling, as well as a retractable roof. An array of Pan-Asian culinary delicacies delight from critically acclaimed chef Ian Pengelley. Thirty different varieties of sake accompany his menu, and a sake sommelier is on hand to inform your choices.

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
EVERY MAN A KING

Even in ballet, which favors hierarchies (principals, soloists, ensemble), Mark Morris habitually works on a no-star system. This is a dearly held principle of his, but he can joke about it. "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes" (1988), his first piece for American Ballet Theatre, included in its cast of twelve a person who was unavoidably a star, Mikhail Baryshnikov. For the first half of the ballet, Baryshnikov was just part of the group. Then, with no fanfare, he walked out alone onstage and launched himself into a little dance that was probably harder, technically, than anything he had ever done before. He started with a triple pirouette, then stopped on a dime, with his leg still in the air, scooted around a hundred and eighty degrees, snapped the leg in and out twice, leaped to the side, and did the whole thing three more times, ending with an arabesque on the floor. "Look who's here!" Morris was saying. Then another man walked in and performed the same phrase, not as well, but pretty well, thus restoring democracy. On Friday night, at City Center, A.B.T. will revive "Drink to Me."

—*Joan Acocella*

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
For A.B.T.'s return to City Center for its fall season, Twyla Tharp is all the rage, with two ballets: the electric, eye-poppingly aerobic "In the Upper Room" (see it) and the sexy, stylish series of duets "Sinatra Suite." Also on the program are "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," Mark Morris's playful 1988 ballet for twelve dancers set to Virgil Thomson piano études, and Balanchine's 1947 Mozart ballet "Symphonie Concertante." David Hallberg reprises his gripping turn as Death in Kurt Jooss's chilling "The Green Table," and Ethan Stiefel returns from his knee surgery to perform "Afternoon of a Faun" and "Fancy Free," both by Jerome Robbins. Thursday marks the première of a new work by Jorma Elo, set to Mozart and Philip Glass. Casts are listed on the company's Web site. ♦ Oct. 18 at 6:30 (gala): The first movement of "Symphonie Concertante" (with Michele Wiles and Veronika Part), "Sinatra Suite" (with Herman Cornejo), pas de deux from "Swan Lake," pas de deux from "Meadow," pas de deux from "Diana and Acteon," and "In the Upper Room." ♦ Oct. 19 at 7:30: Première of the new Elo ballet, "Sinatra Suite," pas de deux from "Known by Heart," and "The Green Table" (with Hallberg). ♦ Oct. 20 at 8: "Symphonie Concertante," "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," and "In the Upper Room." ♦ Oct. 21 at 2: "Symphonie Concertante" (with Wiles and Part), "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," and "Rodeo." ♦ Oct. 21 at 8: The new Elo ballet, "Sinatra Suite" (with Cornejo), "Grand Pas Classique," and "Rodeo." ♦ Oct. 22 at 2: "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," pas de deux from "Swan Lake," pas de deux from "Le Corsaire," and "The Green Table." ♦ Oct. 24 at 7:30: "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," "Meadow," and "In the Upper Room." (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Nov. 5.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
Roots have long been a concern in the Rochester-based choreographer's virtuosic, dazzlingly fluid dances. In "Senku," having its world première at the Joyce, Fagan's subject is the living history of his thirty-five-year-old company: the brio of the elastic young and the accumulated wisdom of veterans like Norwood Pennewell, Steve Humphrey, and Sharon Skepple. The score—a collage of pieces by African composers—is played live by the Ghanaian-American pianist William Chapman Nyaho. The two alternating programs also include last year's "Life: Dark/Light," set to the jazz violinist Billy Bang's "Vietnam: The Aftermath," and "Translation/Transition" (2002). (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Oct. 17-18 at 7:30, Oct. 19-20 at 8, Oct. 21 at 2 and 8, and Oct. 22 at 2 and 7:30.)

SARAH MICHELSON
With "Dogs," the Manchester-born New York choreographer has her début at BAM and so follows the well-trod path by which downtown experimenters find uptown audiences. What she has planned remains a secret. Michelson will say only that the work is reflexive—that it's about what it means to début at BAM, and about how, because of a foot injury, that first could mark the end of her career as a dancer. When she and her longtime collaborators are finished transforming the Harvey Theatre, things are unlikely to be any clearer, only reimagined. (651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Oct. 18-21 at 7:30.)

DUMBO DANCE FESTIVAL
More than eighty emerging contemporary choreographers and companies will play to thousands of spectators during the four days of the sixth annual festival. Performances run continuously; free tickets (available only at the door) are good for an hour-long block. At Thursday's black-tie gala benefit, the wattage is turned up considerably, with special guests like Jennifer Muller/The Works and Battleworks Dance Company. (John Ryan Theatre, 25 Jay St., Brooklyn. 718-855-8822. Oct. 19-22. For complete schedule, visit www.whitewavedance.com.)

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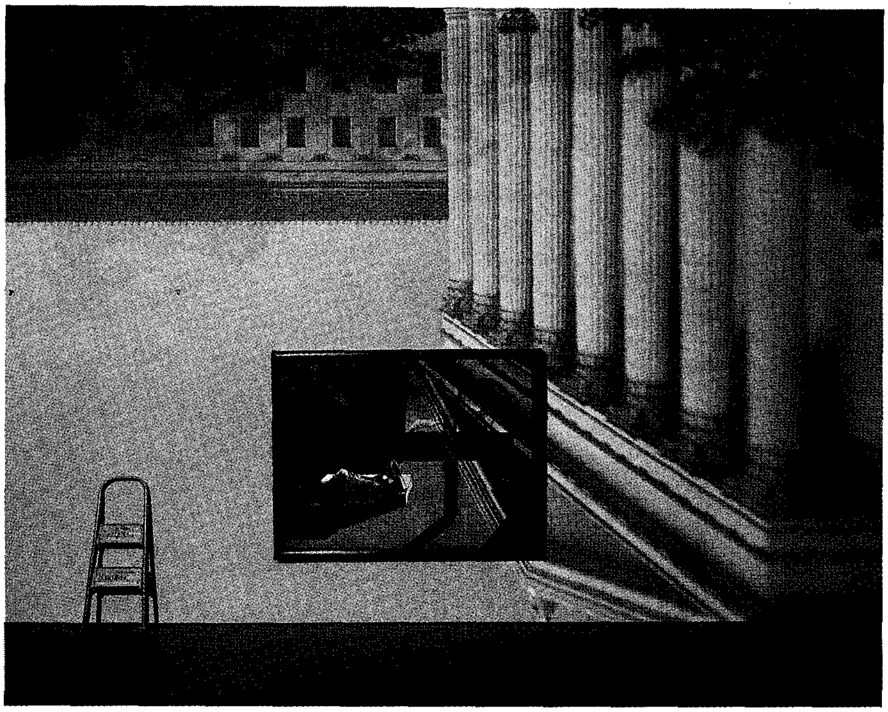

Abelardo Morell's camera-obscura image with a de Chirico painting, at Benrubi.

"RENNIE HARRIS'S NEW YORK LEGENDS OF HIP-HOP"
Harris's showcase concludes its run. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Oct. 19-20 at 7, Oct. 21 at 2 and 7, and Oct. 22 at noon and 5.)

HENNING RÜBSAM: SENSEDANCE
The German-born Rübsam crafts classically based dances, with pointe work and recognizable ballet poses, but always with a twist: awkward lifts, rough breaks in movement, idiosyncratic arm positions. At the Joyce SoHo, his company, Sensedance, performs three new works, two to contemporary art music. (155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Oct. 19-22 at 8.)

"WRESTLING DOSTOIEVSKY"
The Slovene troupe Betontanc ("concrete dance") specializes in a highly physical theatre of slamming bodies and allegorical images. "Wrestling Dostoievsky," presented by Danspace Project as part of the European Dream Festival, tries to pin "Crime and Punishment" to the canvas. An in-the-round set of carpets and domestic lamps provides a deceptively peaceful arena for a wild throw-down between the cast and the themes and characters of the novel. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Oct. 19-20 at 8:30 and Oct. 21 at 7:30.)

THE KATHAK ENSEMBLE AND FRIENDS
The 92nd Street Y's "Sundays @ Three" series presents an afternoon of kathak dance by Janaki Patrik and her students, including eleven-year-old Sanjana Sekhar. The program demonstrates Patrik's deep knowledge of North Indian traditions with dances depicting Krishna, Shiva, and other gods, but her cross-cultural impulses are also indulged. The tap dancer and rhythmic chameleon Max Pollak joins in, and a work in progress pairs kathak's cadential precision and elegance with the same qualities in the allegro finale of Mozart's Forty-first Symphony. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 22 at 3.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
The Guggenheim presents a Mexican company, Ballet de Monterrey, whose repertory combines Mexican-inspired contemporary dance and classical ballet. Members of the company will perform excerpts from several works by the director, Robert Hill, including a pas de deux from "Carmen" and a piece set to the ballads of Chavela Vargas. Hill and the company's founder, Yolanda Santos, will engage in a discussion with the New York-based artist Tony Bechara. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Oct. 22 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Aprile Millo, a reliable purveyor of Italianate passion, takes the title role in a revival of Margherita Wallmann's 1966 production of Ponchielli's **"La Gioconda"**; she'll get some formidable competition from Olga Borodina, as her rival, Laura. Also with Aquiles Machado and Paata Burchuladze; Bertrand de Billy conducts. (Oct. 18 at 7:30.) ♦ The dramatic soprano Violeta Urmana returns as Gioconda for the final performance, with Olga Savova replacing Borodina and Eduardo Villa replacing Machado. (Oct. 21 at 1:30.) ♦ Gounod's **"Faust,"** with Darina Takova, Fernando de la Mora, and Ildar Abdrazakov; de Billy. (Oct. 19 at 7:30.) ♦ The Zeffirelli production of opera's most enduring double bill, **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci,"** returns to the repertory with some impressive casting. The first opera features Maria Guleghina and Franco Farina, while the second is fronted by Patricia Racette, Salvatore Licitra, and Lado Ataneli; Marco Armiliato conducts both. (Oct. 20 at 8 and Oct. 23 at 7:30.) ♦ A breath of fresh air wafts into Peter Gelb's new Met, courtesy of **"Madama Butterfly."** Anthony Minghella's production is awesome, deliberate, and artfully romantic—no surprise to fans of his films. In the title role, Cristina Gallardo-Domâs plays a weak hand with stunning success; Marcello Giordani gives Pinkerton, the American cad, more style and nobility than he perhaps deserves; Asher Fisch. (Oct. 21 at 8 and Oct. 24 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
"Carmen," with Rinat Shaham, Latonia Moore, Mark Duffin, and Adrian Gans; Ari Pelto conducts. (Oct. 18 at 7:30 and Oct. 22 at 1:30.) ♦ Jonathan Miller, who once set Act III of "Rigoletto" in an Edward Hopper-style diner in Little Italy, comes to City Opera to set **"L'Elisir d'Amore"** in another greasy spoon, this time in the American Southwest. Leading the cast are Anna Skibinsky, Erin Morley, John Tessier, Paulo Szot, and Jan Opalach; George Manahan. (Oct. 19 at 7:30 and Oct. 21 at 8.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with a cast that features Inna Dukach, Dana Beth Miller, Dinyar Vania, and Robert Gardner; Steven Mosteller. (Oct. 20 at 8.) ♦ Julius Rudel, who was City Opera's general director from 1957 to 1979, returns (after twenty-five years) to conduct **"Così Fan Tutte"** just as the present director, Paul Kellogg, is heading out the door. Tim Albery's production, in which the action takes place inside an old-time camera box, worked beautifully at Glimmerglass, allowing the singers to inject some human complexity into what can be the most annoyingly artificial of Mozart's operas. Julianna Di Giacomo, Sandra Piques-Eddy, Maureen McKay, Ryan MacPherson, Kyle Pfortmiller, and James Maddalena sing it. (Oct. 21 at 1:30 and Oct. 24 at 7:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

BAM: "VIOLET FIRE"
Nikola Tesla, the genius who invented many of the basic support systems of modern life—alternating current and wireless transmission, for starters—lived much of his life in the hallucinatory haze of his inspiration. An opera by Jon Gibson, a veteran of the Philip Glass Ensemble who has partnered with the librettist Miriam Seidel, offers a multimedia pageant about the eccentric scientist, whose closest friends included both Mark Twain and a pigeon he met in Bryant Park. (30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 18 and Oct. 20-21 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Prokofiev's accompaniment to Eisenstein's majestic "Alexander Nevsky" is one of the triumphs of cinematic music. Xian Zhang, the Philharmonic's associate conductor, will lead a performance of the complete score synchronized with a showing of the film; the mezzo-soprano Meredith Arwady makes her début with the orchestra, with the New York Choral Artists assisting. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Oct. 19 at 7:30 and Oct. 20-21 at 8.)

ANDRÁS SCHIFF AND CAPELLA ANDREA BARCA
Inspired, perhaps, by Gidon Kremer's Kremerata Baltica, the Hungarian pianist has created his own, eponymous chamber orchestra (Andrea Barca is András Schiff in Italian) with which to survey the Mozart piano concertos. The pearly touch, jewelled precision, and intellectual consistency of his playing should be on abundant display. Oct. 18 at 8: The Concertos Nos. 22 and 23, with the Symphony No. 36 ("Linz") in between. ♦ Oct. 19 at 8: The "Jupiter" Symphony, bounded by the Concertos Nos. 24 and 25. ♦ Oct. 22 at 2: A study in contrasts, with the ebullient Concerto No. 9 in E-Flat Major preceding the world-weary Symphony No. 40 in G Minor and the Piano Concerto No. 27 in B-Flat Major. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: "THE ART OF THE PSALM"
Leon Botstein begins another season of historical excavations with a concert of settings by German composers both Christian and Jewish, including Bruckner (Psalm 150), Liszt, Schreker, Reger, and Zemlinsky (Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. Oct. 22 at 3.)

KIROV ORCHESTRA
New York will never get enough of this dark gem of an orchestra and its charismatic maestro, Valery Gergiev. They come to Avery Fisher Hall to complete their centennial survey of the Shostakovich symphonies. Oct. 23 at 8: The cinematic Symphony No. 11 in G Minor ("The Year 1905"), followed by the enigmatic Symphony No. 6 in B Minor. ♦ Oct. 24 at 8: A performance of the Symphony No. 12 ("The Year 1917"), a shameless propaganda exercise, precedes an account of the Symphony No. 14, a chilling—yet strangely exhilarating—essay on death (with the soprano Olga Sergeyeva and the bass Gennady Bezzubenkov). (212-721-6500. Through Oct. 29.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC
Oct. 19-20 at 7:30: The distinguished British cellist Robert Cohen comes to the barge to perform sonatas for cello and piano by Debussy and Grieg, along with a work ("Gala Water") for solo cello by a fellow-Briton, Sally Beamish. ♦ Oct. 21 at 7:30 and Oct. 22 at 4: Bobby White, an elegant fixture in New York's vocal world for decades, celebrates his seventieth birthday, sharing the limelight with the violinist Mark Peskanov, the cellist Darret Adkins, and the composer-pianist Lowell Liebermann in a program featuring songs and works for piano trio by Beethoven, Weber, and Liebermann. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

LEON FLEISHER
Fleisher is the Johnny Cash of classical music: a wounded lion in winter whose performances may lack the nimble touch of youth but compensate with an implacable authenticity that can shake a listener to the core. He comes to Carnegie Hall to perform a program that includes Bach's Capriccio "On the Departure of His Most Beloved Brother," Debussy's "La Cathédrale Engloutie," and Stravinsky's "Serenade in A." (212-247-7800. Oct. 19 at 8.)

LATE-NIGHT BACH RECITALS
Lincoln Center adapts its series of late-night Mostly Mozart serenades at the Kaplan Penthouse for the regular season, this time with Bach. Oct. 19: Anne-Marie McDermott performs the Goldberg Variations. ♦ Oct. 20: Jeremy Denk offers the Third and Fourth Partitas. ♦ Oct. 21: Sergey Schepkin closes the series with the Partita No. 6 and the Italian Concerto. (212-721-6500. All concerts are at 10:30.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "THROUGH BRAHMS"
In the first of two concerts exploring both Brahms's prodigious patrimony and his vast influence, works by Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Schumann prepare the way for Brahms's magnificent String Sextet in G Major. The players include the clarinettist David Shifrin and the Orion String Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Oct. 20 at 8 and Oct. 22 at 5.)

"STEVE REICH @ 70"
Carnegie Hall toasts New York's minimalist master. Oct. 21 at 8: The guitarist Pat Metheny performs "Electric Counterpoint"—written for him—in a concert with Steve Reich and Musicians and Synergy Vocals that includes such foundational works as "Different Trains" and "Music for Eighteen Musicians." (Stern Auditorium.) ♦ Oct. 22 at 7:30: Another classic, "Drumming," completes a program that features the American première of "Daniel Variations," a memorial to the slain journalist Daniel Pearl. The cellist Maya Beiser and the percussionist David Cossin join the ensemble. (Zankel Hall.) (212-247-7800.)

MOVIES OPENING

CONVENTIONEERS
In Mora Stephens's drama, set in New York during the 2004 Republican National Convention, two old friends, a delegate and a protester, become lovers. Opening Oct. 20. (Village East Cinemas.)

51 BIRCH STREET
A documentary by Doug Block, about his discovery of intimate secrets concerning his parents' marriage. Opening Oct. 18. (Cinema Village.)

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
Clint Eastwood directed this drama, about the six American soldiers who hoisted the flag at Iwo Jima. Opening Oct. 20. (In wide release.)

FLICKA
In this family drama, directed by Michael Meyer, a young girl (Alison Lohman) finds a wild horse and wants her father (Tim McGraw) to let her keep it. Opening Oct. 20. (In wide release.)

HAIR HIGH
An animated horror comedy by Bill Plympton, set in a nineteen-fifties high school. Opening Oct. 18. (Pioneer Theatre.)

JONESTOWN: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF PEOPLES TEMPLE
A documentary, directed by Stanley Nelson, about Jim Jones's cult in Guyana and its mass suicide. Opening Oct. 20. (Quad Cinema.)

JUSTICE
The Brazilian court system is the subject of this documentary, directed by Maria Ramos. In Portuguese. Opening Oct. 18. (Film Forum.)

MARIE ANTOINETTE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Oct. 20. (In wide release.)

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS
A rerelease, in 3-D, of the 1993 animated film, directed by Henry Selick, based on a story by Tim Burton, who also co-produced. Opening Oct. 20. (84th Street Sixplex and Union Square.)

THE PRESTIGE
Christopher Nolan directed this fantasy, about two magicians (Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale) who do battle in Edwardian London. Co-starring Scarlett Johansson, Michael Caine, and David Bowie. Opening Oct. 20. (In wide release.)

REQUIEM
A drama about a woman (Sandra Hüller) who believes that she is possessed and who seeks exorcism. Directed by Hans-Christian Schmid. In German. Opening Oct. 20. (IFC Center.)

RUNNING WITH SCISSORS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 20. (In wide release.)

SLEEPING DOGS LIE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 20. (Sunshine Cinema.)

SWEET LAND
Ali Selim directed this historical drama, about a mail-order bride in Minnesota in 1920. Opening Oct. 18. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

ALL THE KING'S MEN
Overemphatic and vague at the same time. Sean Penn, as Willie Stark, the Southern country boy who wants to be governor, wears his hair cropped close at the sides and standing up straight on top. Looking engorged, Penn works hard to put Willie's demagogic speeches over. (The burly Broderick Crawford, who played Willie in the earlier adaptation of Robert Penn Warren's novel, from 1949, was a more natural fit.) Willie rises abruptly, corrupting himself and everyone around him, but Steven Zaillian, who wrote and directed this version, doesn't give us much of a sense of what Willie actually does. What attracts Zaillian's interest is not politics but the social subtext of Penn Warren's novel—the way a crude country lawyer mesmerizes the feeble remnants of the old Southern aristocracy. Much of the movie is moony and slack. With the charming but recessive Jude Law as the reporter who throws in his lot with Willie; Kate Winslet and Mark Ruffalo, both awful, as ineffably cultivated siblings; James Gandolfini and Patricia Clarkson as backroom pols; and Anthony Hopkins as an old judge with a slab of white hair. James Horner wrote the overbearing music.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/2/06.) (In wide release.)

DELIVER US FROM EVIL
The director Amy Berg uses the story of the pedophiliac priest Oliver O'Grady to frame her unequivocal denunciation of the Catholic Church for its long history of concealing rampant child abuse by priests. Although the documentary lacks cohesion, its portraits of O'Grady's victims and their families are honest and heartbreaking. Berg's full access to O'Grady, who was protected by his bishop in California (Bishop Roger Mahony, who later became a cardinal) despite molesting

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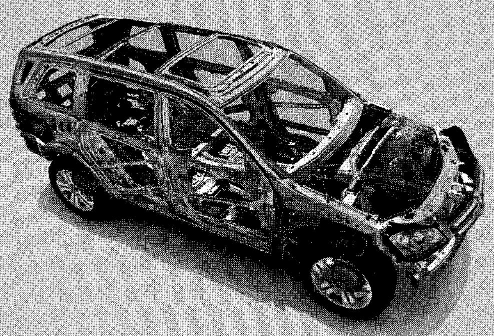

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hundreds of victims for decades, provides a window into the damaged soul of a seemingly gentle but mentally deranged man. A psychologist's lucid explanation of why so many priests demonstrate pedophiliac behavior offers a moment of clarity in this urgent cry for action.—*Shauna Lyon* (Angelika Film Center.)

THE DEPARTED

This merrily vicious and violent Martin Scorsese film about cops and gangsters in Boston will never haunt your sleep, as "Taxi Driver" and "Raging Bull" do, but it will keep you excited and amused for well over two hours. A South Boston mobster (Jack Nicholson) recruits a young neighborhood kid and later places him, as a grownup (played by Matt Damon), in the Massachusetts State Police; the police, in turn, place their own undercover guy (Leonardo DiCaprio) in the crime boss's outfit. It's a double-mole story in which the two moles, in the end, wind up hunting each other. "The Departed" is a remake of the Hong Kong thriller "Infernal Affairs," directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, and it has the speed and volatility of a Hong Kong movie. But Scorsese and the screenwriter, William Monahan, have added weight to the story by digging deep into urban tribal lore—the memories of loyalty and betrayal going back for decades, the nasty old jokes, the bullying insults and invective. Nicholson doesn't seem to take the movie very seriously—he has a ball singing Irish ditties and making rat faces and holding up severed hands—but everyone else is both disciplined and highly adept at delivering the foulmouthed idiom. With Martin Sheen, Mark Wahlberg, and Alec Baldwin as cops, and Vera Farmiga as a police psychiatrist who is attracted to both young men.—*D.D.* (10/16/06) (In wide release.)

49 UP

The seventh film in the seven-year cycle of the fascinating documentary series that began with "Seven Up!," in 1964, about a group of British schoolchildren. The director, Michael Apted, again revisits the group to see where their lives have led them. The latest chapter incorporates moments from the earlier films (the failed marriages, the broken dreams) as the subjects settle into middle age, and it finds them all at a relatively peaceful stage in their lives. Originally presented as a study of the British class system, the films have gradually morphed into a grand look at family; this film, in particular, concentrates on the children and grandchildren of the group. But what's really riveting in this installment is how some of the participants feel toward Apted's admittedly subjective depiction of their lives. Their questions are legitimate, but Apted's interviewing skills and crackerjack editing work give their lives a shape and a resonance that are both moving and illuminating.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

GLENN GOULD: HEREAFTER

This documentary by Bruno Monsaingeon, Gould's longtime audiovisual collaborator, is both a portrait of the philosophical pianist (who died in 1982, at the age of fifty) and a glimpse of the cult he still inspires. In recorded discussions and filmed performances, including precious clips of Gould at recording sessions (where he avoids handshakes with a hypochondriac flourish) and playing the piano at home, he gives voice to his trenchant and wide-ranging thoughts—among them his exaltation of Bach, his intimations of transcendence, and his abandonment of concerts in favor of studio recordings, which he vigorously debates with Yehudi Menuhin at their own breathtaking recording session (devoted to Schoenberg). Gould declares that "a performance is not a contest but a love affair," and Monsaingeon tastelessly devotes too much screen time to several unabashed groupies, including an older woman who converses with a statue of Gould and a young woman who had several bars of his music and his autographed initials tattooed on her back. Nonetheless, the film's generous collection of footage of Gould in ecstasy at the piano illuminates his solitary, self-immolating devotion to his lifelong musical ideal and its seductive, radically conservative power.—*Richard Brody* (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 20-21.)

"Jonestown," directed by Stanley Nelson, opens Oct. 20.

RICHARD MERKIN

GRIDIRON GANG

All those years in the wrestling ring have given The Rock (Dwayne Johnson) an amusing self-awareness. He's charismatic and stentorian and doesn't take a damn thing seriously. In this film, another crowd-pleasing take on "The Longest Yard," he plays a tough but tender coach who inspires a group of juvenile offenders to take their violent impulses to the playing field instead of to the streets. The director, Phil Joanou, gives the material a confident staging, even when the heavy-handed speeches about teamwork and responsibility threaten to reduce the movie to an after-school special.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

A GUIDE TO RECOGNIZING YOUR SAINTS

The kind of fervent mess that is often praised as "raw" and "authentic." The writer-director Dito Montiel, drawing on his own memoir of growing up in Astoria, Queens, in the eighties, is played by Robert Downey, Jr., as a sad, silent, guilty man returning home to the tumultuous neighborhood of his youth. Most of the movie is about his early years. Dito and his friends get in trouble in ways that are so foolish—every scene is a pointless fight—that one thinks Montiel has no reason to feel bad about leaving. Shia LaBeouf, however, shows promise as the sensitive young Dito. With Chazz Palminteri as Dito's hapless father, Dianne Wiest as his mother, and Channing Tatum as his agitated and stupid friend Antonio.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

HEARTS OF THE WORLD

D. W. Griffith filmed scenes of this epic First World War romance in France in 1917, while the battles still raged. The drama stars Lillian Gish and Robert Harron as a pair of poetic lovers from two American expatriate families in a rural French village. When war breaks out, the young man, a writer, volunteers to defend his adopted homeland and endures trench warfare; the girl is driven mad with grief when the Germans destroy and overrun her town and enslave its residents. The plots of espionage and resistance are both stirring and prescient, and, if the day is ultimately saved (without undue pomp) by the arriving American doughboys, the enduring image is of the girl wandering through desolate, smoldering ruins, a broken survivor of a shattered world. Though the idyllic prewar scenes of art and flirtation recall the natural sensuality of Monet and Renoir, Griffith films the detritus of total war like Cubism come to life. Silent.—*R.B.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Oct. 21.)

INFAMOUS

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

JET LI'S FEARLESS

Bracketed by supremely satisfying martial-arts scenes choreographed by the action wizard Yuen Wo Ping, Jet Li's new period epic, a biography of the martial-arts expert Huo Yuan-jia, is a textbook example of the art of wushu, a physical discipline and spiritual philosophy that values honor and humility above all. The film concentrates on Huo's journey from drunken master to noble hero, and the lavish settings and Li's agile, dynamic performance combine to make a thoughtful action film that's less aggressive than fans may expect. The muscular lyricism of the director, Ronny Yu, creates a kung-fu ballet, by turns contemplative and kinetically rich.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

For the role of General Idi Amin Dada, the dictator of Uganda in the nineteen-seventies, Forest Whitaker has transformed himself. The laugh has become enormous, the arms like grappling hooks. This dictator has a terrifying affability: like many sociopaths, he can be intensely empathic. He figures out what people want, but, once you have received his generosity, he believes you belong to him forever. Whitaker goes all the way into Amin's childlike flights of fantasy and egotistical visions, and, as he speaks, one eye opens wide and the other droops malevolently—even his vision is schizoid. James McAvoy is the cocky young Scottish doctor who becomes the general's physician and confidant. Flattered by the great man's interest in him, he refuses to notice the purges and the slaughter going on in the country. Kevin Macdonald, who earlier made documentaries ("One Day in September" and "Touching the Void"), concentrates on the relationship of the two men, and makes something tense and alive out of it. With Gillian Anderson. Shot in Uganda.—*D.D.* (10/2/06) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

LITTLE CHILDREN

A disappointed young mother (Kate Winslet) who has given up graduate school for a lousy marriage in the suburbs starts an affair with a former golden-boy college jock (Patrick Wilson), who is also married but stranded in adulthood. There's an element of garden-variety suspense in Todd Field's new movie, which he adapted with Tom Perrotta from Perrotta's novel—will the lovers run away together? But the movie is about a lot more. In a community devoted to the protection of children, a convicted sex offender (Jackie Earle Haley) shows up. The consternation he creates is so extreme that it seems the filmmakers might be suggesting a metaphor for the indeterminate but all-encompassing threat of terrorism; at the least, they are suggesting that both men and women are transferring their sexual frustrations and fears onto a pervert. The filmmakers' tone veers between a slightly mischievous irony and the most generous sympathy. The sex scenes are brief, naked, heated, startling. In all, it's a beautifully crafted piece of work that leaves you saddened by the mistakes that decent people make but also hopeful about the possibilities of renewal. With Noah Emmerich as a hysterical ex-cop and Jennifer Connelly as a loving wife more interested in her baby son than in her handsome but hapless husband.—*D.D.* (10/16/06) (In wide release.)

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

A charming, independently made family comedy about a winner-take-all society—America—that is driving its citizens crazy. Its hero and victim, Richard Hoover (Greg Kinnear), is a motivational speaker who has invented a nine-step program for success. His seven-year-old daughter, Olive (Abigail Breslin), is entering a Little Miss Sunshine contest; his stepson, Dwayne (Paul Dano), has a private dream in which he is a Nietzschean Übermensch; his wife's brother (Steve Carell), whom the family has taken in, is the No. 1 Proust scholar in the country but has made a fool of himself over a male graduate student who has leaped into the bed of the No. 2 Proust scholar. Is winning everything? The writer, Michael Arndt, and the husband-and-wife directing team, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, narrowly avoid the family-comedy pitfalls of whimsy and mush, but Arndt has a good ear for domestic irritations and the acting is just tough enough to keep us off balance.—*D.D.* (7/31/06) (In wide release.)

THE QUEEN

The new Stephen Frears film considers the deadlock, both grieving and comical, that followed the death of the Princess of Wales, in 1997. On the one hand, the Queen (Helen Mirren), believing it to be a private matter, stays and broods in Scotland with the Duke of Edinburgh (James Cromwell) and Prince Charles (Alex Jennings). On the other hand, Tony Blair (Michael Sheen), sensing a thirst for public mourning and thus a unique political opportunity, urges Her Majesty to return to London and face down the mob. And so she does; the crux of the drama comes when Mirren turns to the crowd outside Buckingham Palace and, with one smile, quashes any prospect of rebellion. The script, by Peter Morgan, relies largely on well-grounded speculation, and sticklers for accuracy will find the whole thing straying beyond belief; but, thanks to the careful performances, you subscribe all too readily to the movie's suggestion of a divided land—of a Britain caught between the trustworthy stiffness of tradition and a liberalism that is open not just to emotional honesty but to the coarseness of modern excess. With Helen McCrory as a distinctly unceremonious Cherie Blair.—*Anthony Lane* (10/9/06) (In wide release.)

RUNNING WITH SCISSORS

Ryan Murphy directs the film adaptation of Augusten Burroughs's best-selling memoir. Joseph Cross is aptly cast as Augusten, who is shown as a young boy emotionally tethered to his hyperdramatic mother (Annette Bening), a divorcée with literary aspirations. He watches her devolve into pill-induced incoherence, at which point she turns him over to the guardianship of her unorthodox psychologist, Dr. Finch (Brian Cox), and his family. Murphy puts a high gloss on dysfunction, and the tediously drawn-out scenes that are constantly punctuated with high-energy seventies songs counteract any potential emotional connection with the characters. The fine cast includes Evan Rachel Wood, Jill Clayburgh, and Gwyneth Paltrow as Finch's family and Joseph Fiennes as Augusten's first boyfriend, each exuding a gloominess that is never dispelled; Bening, though often leaning toward the absurd, is compelling as the disappointing star of Augusten's life. In the end, though, the whole affair is too melancholy to be funny and too cartoonish to be moving.—*S.L.* (In wide release.)

SANSHO THE BAILIFF

Kenji Mizoguchi's masterpiece, from 1954, is a heartbreaking medieval fable with modern political and psychological undertones. An exiled statesman taught his son, Zushio, that "without mercy, a man is like a beast." But Zushio can't hold on to that ideal. When kidnappers sell his mother into prostitution, and Zushio and his sister into a slave camp run by the title character, the boy grows up a barbarian. Like the worst concentration-camp Kapo, he's willing to brand attempted escapees on the forehead. The first half hour is a cascade of flashbacks and present-tense action; in the camp, volatile lyricism gives way to relentless power. It's as if Mizoguchi is saying, sadly, that this is how the world works. The movie takes a fairy-tale turn, but no one lives happily ever after. Terrifying and cathartic, "Sansho" is a morality play without easy moralism. Kinuyo Tanaka is superb as the mother. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 19-20.)

SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

In this flat, sour, and contrived comedy, Roger (Jon Heder), a timid New York City parking cop, signs up for classes with a macho confidence guru, Dr. P. (Billy Bob Thornton), and, taught to find his inner lion, gets up the nerve to ask out his secret dream girl, his Australian grad-student neighbor, Amanda (Jacinda Barrett). Dr. P.'s brutal psychodramatic methods, however, also include his own attempt to seduce Amanda, and the movie becomes an escalating war of scams with which the two contenders try to discredit, displace, and destroy each other. Unfortunately, the gleefully mean-spirited humor quickly ramps up to a ludicrous implausibility, wasting the premise and the actors on exaggerated gags that don't even have the virtue of cartoonishness. Moreover, racial stereotypes abound; what were Scot Armstrong (who co-wrote) and Todd Phillips (who co-wrote and directed) thinking?—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP

The new project from Michel Gondry proves that he is still determined to treat cinema as an advanced form of child's play. Gael García Bernal plays a young Mexican, recently returned to Paris, who takes a dreary job and meets a couple of French girls when they drill through the wall of his apartment. One of them (Charlotte Gainsbourg) almost becomes his paramour, and his stumbles toward her—not to mention the dreams that he wraps around her—make up the bulk of the story. Gondry scorns any need to mark the border of sleeping and waking, slipping like a spy between the two; normal conversations keep branching off into fantasy, and a grinning Bernal takes every change in stride. The outcome is sometimes jubilant but mostly shapeless, and Gondry could have used some help from Charlie Kaufman, with whom he concocted "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind." Despite the sprightly makeover, it's the old problem: when people start telling you their dreams, you don't know where to look. In Spanish, English, and French.—*A.L.* (9/25/06) (In wide release.)

SHORTBUS

John Cameron Mitchell's sex-drenched study of a group of beautiful, emotionally lost New Yorkers on a quest for intimacy. The movie's central characters—a couples therapist who can't achieve orgasm (Sook-Yin Lee), a depressed ex-hustler and his boyfriend (played by the real-life couple Paul Dawson and PJ DeBoy), and an unhappy dominatrix (Lindsay Beamish)—are one-dimensional stereotypes of sad and lonely outsiders, but Mitchell's eager camerawork and playful screenplay filled with snappy comic asides elevate the film's less than compelling emotional aspects. When everyone comes together at Shortbus, an underground sex club, the film exposes itself for what it really is—a sentimental, neo-romantic film in which hedonism is a tonic for the masses.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

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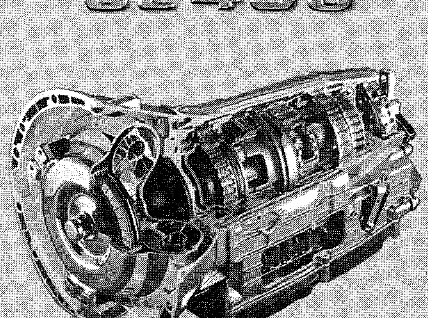

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SLEEPING DOGS LIE
The writer and director Bobcat Goldthwait turns an almost unredeemably ribald comedy into a peculiarly moving drama. An eighteen-year-old girl, alone in her room with her dog, performs oral sex on him; years later, as a teacher engaged to be married, she shares her secret with her fiancé, to devastating effect. In a few well-constructed set pieces showing the couple at home, at work, among friends, and, crucially, at the home of her conservative, religious parents, to whom she is introducing her intended, Goldthwait sharply sketches love's rapid turnabouts and the tensions that simmer in families for decades. The clever dialogue, the straightforward, unpretentious technique, and, above all, the talented and perceptively directed B-list cast (including Melinda Page Hamilton as the young woman, Bryce Johnson as her fiancé, Geoff Pierson as her father, and Colby French as her sensitive colleague) lend the film unexpected depth. Nonetheless, a few lapses in tone arouse the suspicion that the hyperbolic comic premise is the film's true raison d'être, and that the rest of the film, despite its emotional resonance, is just an elaborate deadpan put-on.—*R.B.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

Also Playing

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH: In wide release. **THE GRUDGE 2:** In wide release. **THE GUARDIAN:** In wide release. **MAN OF THE YEAR:** In wide release. **OPEN SEASON:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In première. Oct. 20 and Oct. 23-24 at 7 and 9 and Oct. 21-22 at 5, 7, and 9: "Masai: The Rain Warriors" (2005, Pascal Plisson; in Masai). ♦ Films by Kelly Reichardt. Oct. 22 at 6: "River of Grass" (1993). ♦ Oct. 22 at 8: "Ode" (1999) and short films.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"TeslaMania!" Oct. 19 at 6: Short films about Nikola Tesla, including "Jack Shows Meg His Tesla Coil" (2003, Jim Jarmusch). ♦ Silent films from the Pordenone Festival. Oct. 20 at 7: "Treasures from a Chest," clips presented by Serge Bromberg. ♦ Oct. 21 at 4: "Hearts of the World" (†). ♦ Oct. 21 at 8: "The Scarlet Letter" (1926, Victor Sjöström). ♦ Oct. 22 at 4: "Germinal" (1913, Albert Capellani). ♦ Oct. 22 at 7:30: "The Wonderful Lies of Nina Petrovna" (1929, Hanns Schwarz). ♦ "Made in (Brooklyn) NY." Oct. 23 at 7: "Letter from Greenpoint" (2004, Jonas Mekas) and "Williamsburg, Brooklyn" (1949-2003, Mekas), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Oct. 24 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "She's Gotta Have It" (1986, Spike Lee).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. ♦ Oct. 18-19 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "California Split" (1974, Robert Altman). ♦ Oct. 20-24 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Aguirre, the Wrath of God" (1972, Werner Herzog; in German).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Oct. 31: French comedies. Oct. 24 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Santa Claus Is a Louse" (1981, Jean-Marie Poiré; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Through Oct. 29: Eric Rohmer's "Six Moral Tales." Oct. 20-23 at noon: "Claire's Knee" (1970; in French). ♦ "Ecotopia." Oct. 23 at 7: "From the Other Side" (2002, Chantal Akerman) and "The Other Side" (2006, Bill Brown). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction." Oct. 24 at 7:30: "Summercamp!" (2006, Sarah Price and Bradley Beesley).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Special screening. Oct. 18 at 6:30: "High Society" (1956, Charles Walters), introduced by Kathryn Crosby. ♦ "Reel New York." Oct. 18 at 7: Short films, including "Ghosts of Grey Gardens" (2004, Liliana Greenfield-Sanders), introduced by Garrison Botts, of Thirteen/WNET, and the filmmakers. ♦ "The Residents: Re-Viewed." Oct. 19 at 6 and Oct. 21 at 2: Program 1. Short films, including "One-Minute Movies" (1980). ♦ Oct. 19 at 8:30 and Oct. 22 at 6: Program 2. Short films, including "Burn Baby" (2000). ♦ Oct. 20 at 6 and Oct. 22 at 4: "Demons Dance Alone" (2002). ♦ Through Oct. 29: The films of Otto Preminger. Oct. 20 at 8: "Skidoo" (1968). ♦ Oct. 21 at 5: "Carmen Jones" (1954). ♦ Oct. 21 at 7:30: "Laura" (1944). ♦ The Films of Gunvor Nelson. Oct. 20 at 8: Program 1. Short films, including "Red Shift" (1984). ♦ Oct. 21 at 4: Program 2. Short films, including "Light Years" (1987). ♦ Oct. 21 at 6: Program 3. Short films, including "Fog Pumas" (1967). ♦ "Out of Time." Oct. 23 at 6:30: "The Himmler Project" (2001, Romuald Karmakar; in German).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"The Japanese Film: A Tribute to Donald Richie." Oct. 20 at 7:30 and Oct. 21 at 5: "Rashomon" (1951, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). The Oct. 21 screening will be introduced by Richie. ♦ Oct. 21 at 2: Short films by Richie, including "Life" (1965), introduced by the director. ♦ Oct. 22 at 3: "Tokyo Story" (1953, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 22 at 6: "Late Spring" (1949, Ozu; in Japanese).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Horror films. Oct. 18 at 7: "The Asphyx" (1973, Peter Newbrook). ♦ Oct. 19 at 7: "Autopsy" (1975, Armando Crispino). ♦ Oct. 23 at 7: "Bad Ronald" (1974, Buzz Kulik).

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave., between 37th and 38th Sts. (212-879-9779)—Through Dec. 16: Documentaries from Scandinavia. Oct. 18 at 6:30: "Gitmo—The New Rules of War" (2006, Erik Gandini and Tarik Saleh; in Swedish and English). ♦ Oct. 21 at 3: "Family" (2001, Sami Saif; in Danish and English).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Oct. 20-21: "Half Baked" (1998, Tamra Davis).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Thalia Film Classics." Oct. 22 and Oct. 24 at 5: "A Man Escaped" (1956, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ "Thalia Film Currents." Oct. 22 and Oct. 24 at 7: "Who Killed the Electric Car?" (2006, Chris Paine).

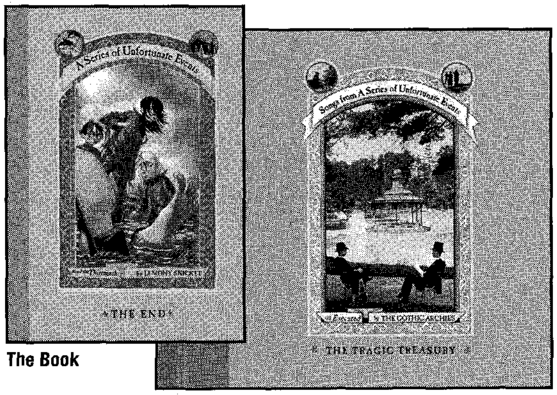
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"50 Years of Janus Films." Oct. 18 at 1 and 6:15 and Oct. 20 at 1: "The Earrings of Madame De . . ." (1953, Max Ophuls; in French). ♦ Oct. 18 at 3:15 and Oct. 21 at 6:30: "L'Avventura" (1960, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Oct. 18 at 8:30 and Oct. 19 at 1: "Ballad of a Soldier" (1959, Grigori Chukhrai; in Russian). ♦ Oct. 19 at 3: "Wild Strawberries" (1957, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Oct. 19 at 8:30 and Oct. 20 at 3:15: "Sansho the Bailiff" (†). ♦ Oct. 21 at 9:15 and Oct. 24 at 8:45: "Day of Wrath" (1943, Carl Theodor Dreyer; in Danish). ♦ Oct. 22 at 1:30: "High and Low" (1963, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 23 at 4 and 9 and Oct. 24 at 1: "Walkabout" (1971, Nicolas Roeg). ♦ Oct. 23 at 6:15 and Oct. 24 at 3: "Fires on the Plain" (1959, Kon Ichikawa; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 24 at 6:30: "The Phantom Carriage" (1921, Victor Sjöström; silent). ♦ Through Nov. 18: Glenn Gould on film. (Presented in conjunction with Lincoln Center's Great Performers series.) Oct. 20 at 6:30 and Oct. 21 at 2: "Glenn Gould: Hereafter" (†). ♦ Oct. 20 at 8:45: Short films of Gould playing the Goldberg Variations (1964 and 1981).

RICCARDO VECCHIO

Words on Music

The Official Musical Companion to
Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

THE TRAGIC TREASURY CD *executed by* The Gothic Archies


A Series of Unfortunate Events
THE END
Songs from A Series of Unfortunate Events
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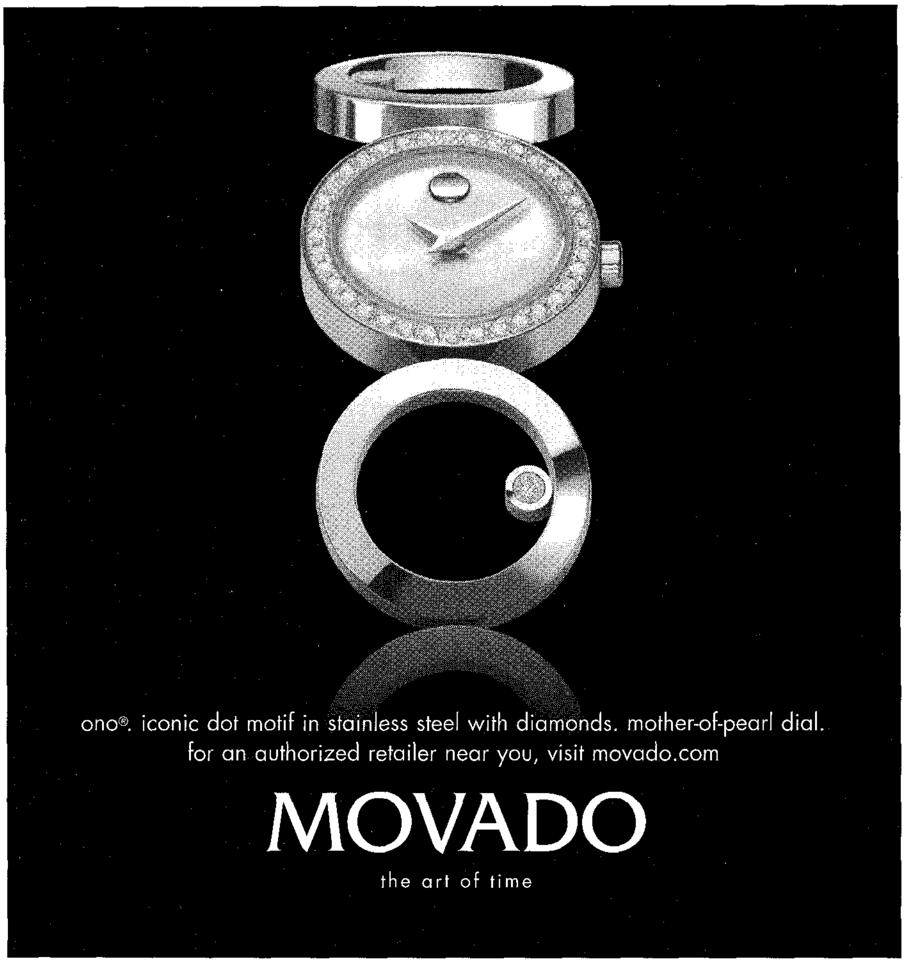
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
A BREAKOUT ROLE

Robert Bresson's "A Man Escaped," from 1956, begins with a shot of a young man's hands as he is taken to a prison in Lyon during the German Occupation of France, and it returns to those hands as they scrape, cut, twist, bend, climb, kill, and, finally, release a rope that leads to freedom. It is not only the greatest of all prison-break movies but also an astoundingly detailed account of the activities of homo faber—man the toolmaker, or, in this case, man the escape artist, who begins with only a heavy spoon and, piece by piece, creates the means of his physical and spiritual liberation. Bresson shot the movie in the Montluc fortress; most of it takes place in the cell of a Resistance fighter named Fontaine (played by François Leterrier, a philosophy student from the Sorbonne). You rarely see the faces of the Germans, and among the French there is an intense solidarity. The prisoner's lonely ardor is enhanced by Mozart's Mass in C Minor; the ending of the movie, as the music wells up, is pure elation. The film plays at the Thalia from Oct. 22 through Oct. 31.

—David Denby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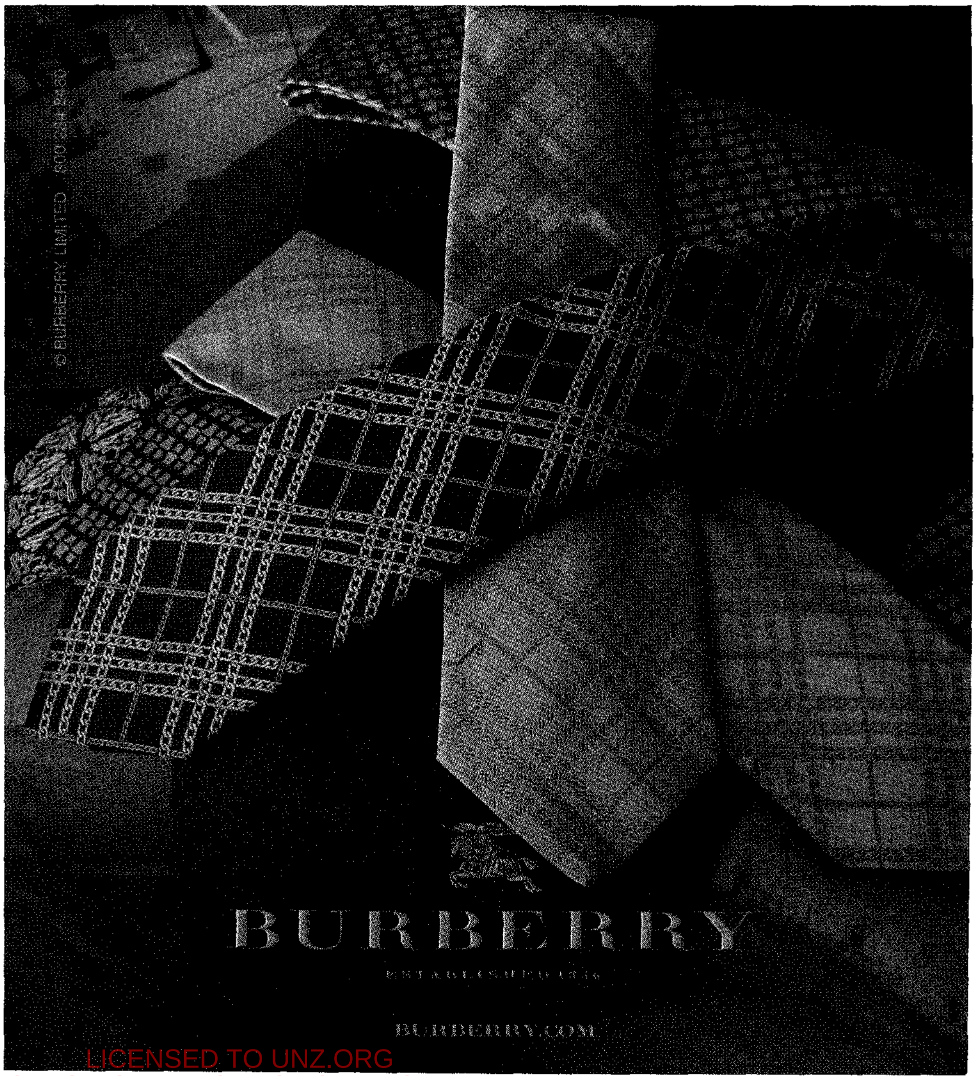
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READINGS AND TALKS

HEIDI JULAVITS
Julavits reads from her latest novel, "The Uses of Enchantment," which revolves around the possible disappearance of a well-to-do sixteen-year-old after the cancellation of her field-hockey match. (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 22nd St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 18 at 7.)

"THALIA BOOK CLUB"
Bill Bryson reads from and discusses his new book, "The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir." (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Oct. 18 at 7:30.)

NAHID RACHLIN
Rachlin, a novelist who grew up in Iran under the Shah, reads from her memoir, "Persian Girls." (Barnes & Noble, 280 E. 86th St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 19 at 7.)

"RECKONING WITH HART CRANE"
Langdon Hammer, the editor of the newly published collection "Hart Crane: Complete Poems & Selected Letters," joins Wayne Koestenbaum, David Yezzi, and other writers to talk about the life and work of the poet. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. Oct. 23 at 6:30.)

"POETS OUT LOUD"
The reading series at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus presents the poets Tess Gallagher, Linda Gregg, and Saskia Hamilton. (113 W. 60th St., 12th fl. No tickets necessary. Oct. 23 at 7:30.)

92ND STREET Y
The chefs Anthony Bourdain, Eric Ripert, and Gabrielle Hamilton, all of whom contributed to the new anthology "How I Learned to Cook," talk about their culinary educations. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 23 at 8:15.)

ELISHA COOPER
Cooper, a children's-book illustrator, reads from "Crawling," his account of his first year as a father. (Borders, 10 Columbus Circle. No tickets necessary. Oct. 24 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"L'INFERNO"
Giuseppe de Liguoro's 1911 silent film, which is *considered to be Italy's first full-length feature and* was inspired by Gustave Doré's dark and fantastic nineteenth-century illustrations of Dante's epic, will be screened at the Rubin Museum of Art. The poet Robert Pinsky will give a synchronized reading of a script based on his translation of the poem. He'll be joined by the actors Len Cariou and Roberta Maxwell for the seventy-one-minute trip through Hell. The violinist Gil Morgenstern opens the evening with a performance of Bruce Saylor's "Dante Suite." (150 W. 17th St. 212-620-5000, ext. 344. Oct. 18 at 7.)

"DR. SKETCHY'S ANTI-ART SCHOOL"
Molly Crabapple, a young local artist with a flair for giving retro-looking illustrations a sexy updating, runs this biweekly drawing and social event at the Lucky Cat Lounge, in Williamsburg. A burlesque performer replaces the traditional demure art model, lighthearted contests take place (one recent prize was for the best incorporation of a woodland animal in a drawing), and drinks, both alcoholic and non, are for sale. Every so often, Crabapple puts on a Bring Your Friend Who Can't Draw day, in which she provides coloring-book pages and crayons for the less talented. The next session, on Oct. 21, from 3 to 6, features a goth model named Theda, Halloween prizes, candy corn, and a discount for those who arrive in costume. (245 Grand St., between Driggs Ave. and Roebling St. For more information, visit www.drsketchy.com.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
At **Sotheby's**, Oct. 18 is devoted to English furniture, ceramics, and silver; on Oct. 20 the house presents pieces from the collection of the New York interior designer Anthony Ingrao, which include everything from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European furniture to twentieth-century design. Finishing touches, such as a Louis XVI snuffbox decorated with an automated tightrope dancer, can be picked up at a sale of silver and objects of virtu (Oct. 23). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ The *antiquaire* Maurice Segoura, purveyor of objects of beauty to museums and people of taste for almost fifty years, closed the doors to his Paris gallery in March; on Oct. 19 **Christie's** presents important pieces from his collection, including a Louis XV commode, made by Jean-Pierre Latz, "*ébéniste privilégié du Roi.*" More European furniture is offered on Oct. 20 and Oct. 24. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ **Phillips** holds one of its periodic sales of photographs (Oct. 18), where one can choose from a selection of works from the collection of Michael Ovitz's former concern, Artists Management Group (including one by Richard Avedon of a young Bob Dylan standing on the corner of 132nd Street and F.D.R. Drive), and a set of poetic figurative studies by the Welsh painter and designer Frank Brangwyn. (450 W. 15th St. 212-940-1200.) ♦ The 7th Regiment Armory hosts the **International Fine Art and Antique Dealers Show** (Oct. 20-26), with seventy dealers showing furniture, paintings, textiles, and more. (Park Ave. at 67th St. 212-642-8572.)

JOSH COCHRAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
IN THEATRES
Nov. 10-Dec. 31

Jacques Rivette is the most eclectic of the French New Wave directors. His features, from "Paris Belongs to Us" to "The Story of Marie and Julien," combine the neoclassical rigor of Hitchcock and Lang with the freewheeling methods of avant-garde theatre. Moving Image will offer a retrospective of Rivette's fifty-year career, including the American première of his twelve-hour "Out 1: Noli Me Tangere," from 1971. (718-784-0077.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CLOSE SHAVE
Nov. 10

Bartlett Sher ("The Light in the Piazza"), part of a new generation of directors at the Metropolitan Opera, leads a creative team that is making the first new production of "The Barber of Seville" in twenty-five years. The starry cast features such singers as Diana Damrau, Juan Diego Flórez, and Peter Mattei. (212-362-6000.)

THE THEATRE
TIME AFTER TIME
Nov. 13-Nov. 12, 2007

After the playwright Suzan-Lori Parks won a Pulitzer Prize, in 2002, for "Topdog/Underdog," she pledged to write a play per day for a year. The Public Theatre mounts "365 Days/365 Plays," a yearlong festival of those works. Tickets at the Public will be free. (www.publictheatre.org/365.)

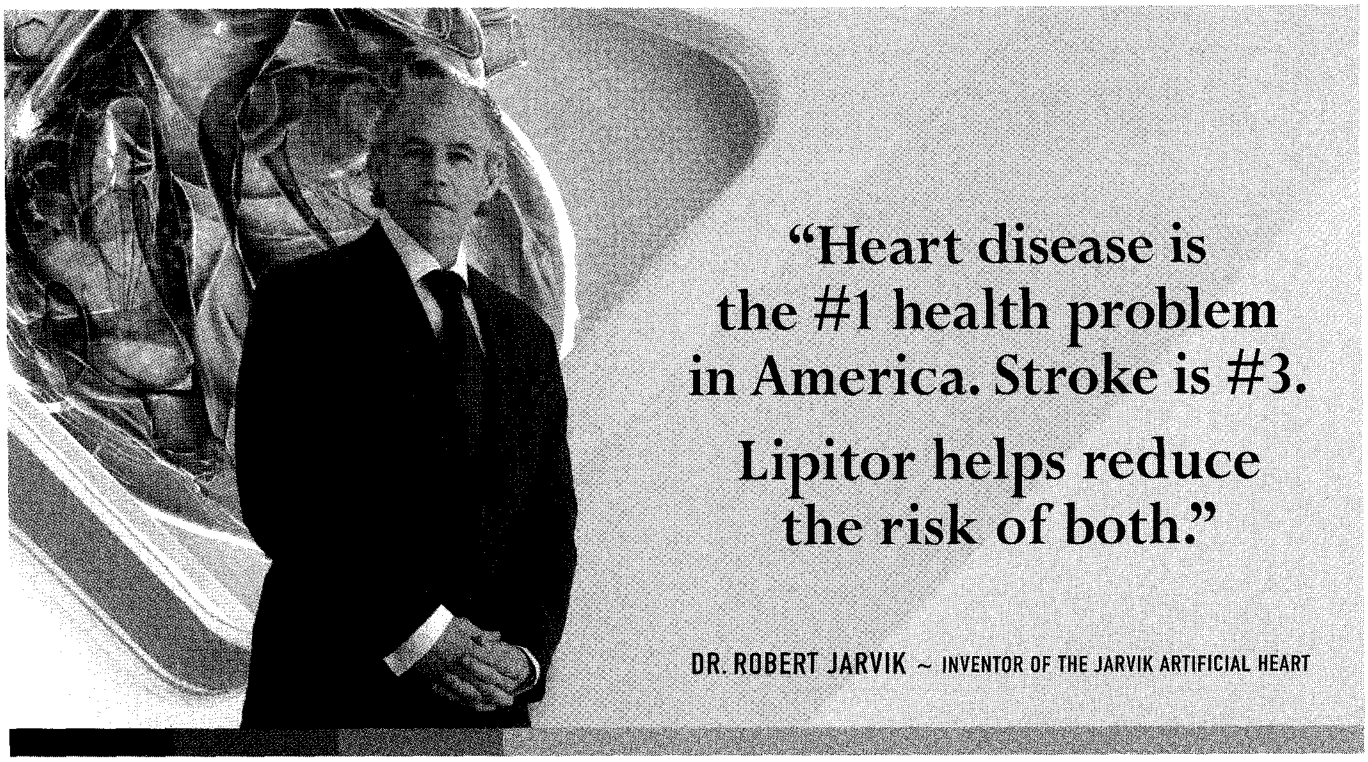
ART
AFRICOMICS
Nov. 15-March 18, 2007

The Studio Museum in Harlem's "Africa Comics," organized with the interdisciplinary journal *Africa e Mediterraneo*, which is based in Italy, will examine how the populist form is thriving on the African continent. (212-864-4500.)

NIGHT LIFE
OLD FOLKS
Nov. 18

In the early sixties, the Friends of Old Time Music brought to New York City a number of folk and blues musicians from the South, including Mississippi John Hurt, Fred McDowell, and the Stanley Brothers. Next month, members of the Friends will hold a conference at CUNY's Graduate Center, followed by a concert with the New Lost City Ramblers, Doc Watson, and others at Town Hall. (www.bcisam.org.)

The Friends of Old Time Music show, at Town Hall.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Unlike some cholesterol-lowering medications, Lipitor has been approved to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke if you have several common risk factors for heart disease. Risk factors include family history, high blood pressure, age, low HDL ('good' cholesterol) or smoking. Along with diet and exercise, Lipitor lowers bad cholesterol 39-60%.*

*Average effect depending on dose

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: LIPITOR is a prescription drug. It is used in patients with multiple risk factors for heart disease such as family history, high blood pressure, age, low HDL ('good' cholesterol) or smoking to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. When diet and exercise alone are not enough, LIPITOR is used along with a low-fat diet and exercise to lower cholesterol.

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Tell your doctor about all of the medicines you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

Please see additional important information on next page.

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IMPORTANT FACTS

LIPITOR
atorvastatin calcium
tablets

(LIP-ih-tore)

LOWERING YOUR HIGH CHOLESTEROL

High cholesterol is more than just a number, it's a risk factor that should not be ignored. If your doctor said you have high cholesterol, you may be at an increased risk for heart attack. But the good news is, you can take steps to lower your cholesterol.

With the help of your doctor and a cholesterol-lowering medicine like LIPITOR, along with diet and exercise, you could be on your way to lowering your cholesterol.

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WHO IS LIPITOR FOR?

Who can take LIPITOR:

- People who cannot lower their cholesterol enough with diet and exercise
- Adults and children over 10

Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

- Women who are pregnant, may be pregnant, or may become pregnant. LIPITOR may harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant, stop LIPITOR and call your doctor right away.
- Women who are breast-feeding. LIPITOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby.
- People with liver problems
- People allergic to anything in LIPITOR

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Tell your doctor:

- About all medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- If you have muscle aches or weakness
- If you drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day
- If you have diabetes or kidney problems
- If you have a thyroid problem

ABOUT LIPITOR

LIPITOR is a prescription medicine. Along with diet and exercise, it lowers "bad" cholesterol in your blood. It can also raise "good" cholesterol (HDL-C).

LIPITOR can lower the risk of heart attack or stroke in patients who have risk factors for heart disease such as:

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POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems**. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain
- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Diarrhea, gas
- Rash
- Constipation
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves. Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

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Do:

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- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or health care provider.
- Talk to your pharmacist.
- Go to **www.lipitor.com** or call **1-888-LIPITOR**.

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LPIF Rev 2, Dec 2005

LP278791-A

THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
NUKE REBUKE

When Kim Jong Il, who seems to have modelled his villainy on old Jonny Quest cartoons, announced that his government had conducted a successful nuclear-weapons test, it was like watching the unhinged teen-ager in your neighborhood finally set a house on fire. He seeks attention, the experts tell us, and he wants some love. George W. Bush won't give it to him, of course. The President delivered his stern replies in the ominous dialect of nuclear warning, threatening to hold North Korea "fully accountable" if Kim sells bombs as freely as he has sold missiles. In deference to his Asian negotiating partners, and presumably aware that the military-strike options he intuitively prefers are not viable, Bush was otherwise subdued. He even allowed himself to say that American policy sought "a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula," which sounded more like a Eugene, Oregon, city-council resolution than his usual lecture on war and resolve.

The election season required a shouting match about whose negotiating tactics with North Korea were the most doomed. Certainly the Bush Administration contributed more than its share to the final result. By invading Iraq and failing there, it depleted every variety of American power fighting one enemy that possessed no nuclear weapons, while emboldening a second that was building a store of them, and a third, Iran, that has evidently decided that it must get some, and soon.

The Administration's fitful attempts at nuclear diplomacy have been undermined by its proud contempt for multilateral-treaty regimes. Its arms-control specialists, such as John Bolton, fantasize that they can stop nuclear proliferation the way the British Navy once tried to stop the slave trade: through military force and interdiction at sea. Moral suasion and sustained bargaining, the proven mechanisms of nuclear restraint in addition to deterrence, interest this Administration much less. Perhaps North Korea would have tested its nuclear bomb even if Bush had, from the outset of his Presidency, embraced the vision of nuclear abolition articulated by Ronald Reagan, or if he had advanced the policies of his father, and of Bill Clinton, by using American influence to negotiate actively to diminish the role of nuclear arms as instruments of state power. We'll never know.

The more important question now is whether we are witnessing the end of the formal nuclear order defined by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was opened for signature in 1968. That agreement proscribes all but five countries—the United States, Russia, China, Britain, and France—from possessing nuclear weapons, in exchange for a pledge from the five to eliminate their own stockpiles at some unspecified future time. The International Atomic Energy Agency is the treaty's enforcement arm; other nuclear agreements often serve, in effect, as codicils.

A decade ago, the N.P.T. system, although hardly flawless (burdened, for instance, by Israel's defiance of the regime), looked to be in fairly ruddy health. As the Soviet Union broke up, Bush's father stripped thousands of targets from secret nuclear war plans, endorsed a large reduction in the size of the U.S. arsenal, and helped insure that Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus would surrender any bombs they inherited. Arduous diplomacy in the first years of the Clinton Administration confirmed these commitments; South Africa, Brazil, and Argentina also voluntarily gave up their nuclear weapons programs; and the five acknowledged nuclear

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

powers signed a test-ban treaty. These decisions, by such disparate governments, seemed to show that atomic arsenals were of increasingly marginal value.

India's Hindu nationalist leaders shattered this momentum when they tested nuclear weapons, without provocation, in 1998. Clinton offered extraordinary amounts of aid to Pakistan's dim Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, if he would refrain from reciprocal tests; he went ahead anyway. Neither Pakistan nor India paid a serious price. North Korea's and Iran's leaders discovered through these examples that a full-blown weapons program could become, at a minimum, a source of leverage. China coddled North Korea and pushed its own nuclear modernization without penalty. Bin Laden announced his nuclear ambitions.

When President Bush came to office, he showed little interest in the non-proliferation regime or its goals. His axis-of-evil formulation and his invasion of Iraq stoked the paranoia of the regimes in Pyongyang and Tehran, yet Bush had no strategy to talk them down from the nuclear ledge. Libya did agree to abandon its nuclear program, but that has been overwhelmed by other failures. On Bush's watch, atomic weapons have been revalued—not quite to the point of legitimacy, perhaps, but certainly upward, as sources of influence, national pride, and anti-American defiance.

The North Korean test matters most as a symbol of accumulating trouble. Last week, infused by pessimism, a chorus of newspaper columnists and arms-control specialists declared that the N.P.T. system is in its death throes, and so, some of them argued, it is time to embrace an updated system of the deterrence and threats of massive retaliation that prevailed during the Cold War. This might include innovations such as those promoted by Harvard University's Graham Allison, who advocates the nuclear equivalent of fingerprinting techniques to dissuade governments like North Korea's from ever slipping their bombs to terrorists or cults.

Certainly, for as long as states hold nuclear weapons, the people who run governments must concentrate mightily on how to deter their use. But, in the long run, an approach that relies heavily on "C.S.I.: Armageddon" is not likely to be stable. As with global warming, the difficulty in reversing nuclear proliferation is not a lack of viable techniques—whether they are tools for policing or treaty negotiations, such as the neglected talks on a global cap on the production of nuclear-bomb materials. The problem is an absence of vision and leadership.

The global system that encourages states to acquire nuclear weapons is complex and difficult to manipulate. So was the system that girded the colonial slave trade. Both are immoral. The only solution to the problem of nuclear proliferation is to engage in the daunting, dull, and entirely plausible project of steadily making such weapons marginal, illegitimate, and very difficult to acquire, inspired by a final vision of enforceable abolition. The N.P.T. is the only realistic framework for such work. It is like no other treaty regime ever enacted—a blend of idealism and ruthless realpolitik, global in scope, with a large police force, at the I.A.E.A., already in place. The treaty is eroding, but to turn away from its principles now would be far more irrational than any calculation Kim Jong Il has yet made.

—*Steve Coll*

DOH! DEPT.
THE $40-MILLION ELBOW

You might have seen "Le Rêve," Picasso's 1932 portrait of his mistress, Marie-Thérèse Walter, in your college art-history textbook. The painting is owned by Steve Wynn, the casino magnate and collector of masterpieces. He acquired it in a private sale in 2001 from an anonymous collector, who had bought it at auction in 1997 for $48.4 million. Recently, Wynn decided that he'd like to sell it, along with several other museum-quality paintings that he owns. A friend of his, the hedge-fund mogul and avid collector Steven Cohen, had coveted "Le Rêve" for years, so he and Wynn and their intermediaries worked out a deal. Cohen agreed to pay a hundred and thirty-nine million dollars for it, the highest known price ever paid for a work of art.

A few weeks ago, on a Thursday, a representative of Cohen's came from California to inspect the painting. She removed it from the wall, took it out of its frame, and confirmed that it was in excellent shape. On Friday, she wrote her condition report, and so, according to their contract, the deal was done. All that was left was the actual exchange of money and art.

That weekend, Wynn had some friends visiting from New York—David and Mary Boies, Nora Ephron and Nick Pileggi, Louise Grunwald, and Barbara Walters. They were staying, as they often do, at his hotel and casino, the Wynn Las Vegas. As they had dinner together on Friday night, Wynn told them about the sale. "The girls said, 'We've got to see it tomorrow,'" Wynn recalled last week. "So I said, 'I'll be working tomorrow. Just come on up to the office.'" (He had recently moved "Le Rêve" there from the hotel lobby.)

The guests came at five-thirty, and Wynn ushered them in. On the wall to his left and right were several paintings, including a Matisse, a Renoir, and "Le Rêve." The other three walls were glass, looking out onto an enclosed garden. He began to tell the story of the Picasso's provenance. As he talked, he had his back to the picture. He was wearing jeans and a golf shirt. Wynn suffers from an eye disease, retinitis pigmentosa, which affects his peripheral vision and therefore, occasionally, his interaction with proximate objects, and, without realizing it, he backed up a step or two as he talked. "So then I made a gesture with my right hand," Wynn said, "and my right elbow hit the picture. It punctured the picture." There was a distinct ripping sound. Wynn turned around and saw, on Marie-Thérèse Walter's left forearm, in the lower-right quadrant of the painting, "a slight puncture, a two-inch tear. We all just stopped. I said, 'I can't believe I just did that. Oh, shit. Oh, man.'"

Wynn turned around again. He put his pinkie in the hole and observed that a flap of canvas had been pushed back. He told his guests, "Well, I'm glad I did it and not you." He said that he'd have to call Cohen and William Acquavella, his dealer in New York, to tell them that the deal was off. Then he resumed talking about his paintings, almost, but not quite, as though he hadn't just delivered what one of the guests would later call, in an impromptu stab at actuarial math, a "forty-million-dollar elbow."

A few hours later, they all met for dinner, and Wynn was in a cheerful mood. "My feeling was, It's a picture, it's my picture, we'll fix it. Nobody got sick or died. It's a picture. It took Picasso five hours to paint it." Mary Boies ordered a six-litre bottle of Bordeaux, and when it was empty she had everyone sign the label, to commemorate the calamitous afternoon. Wynn signed it "Mary, it's all about scale—Steve." Everyone had agreed to take what one participant called a "vow of silence." (The vow lasted a week, until someone leaked the rudiments of the story to the *Post.*)

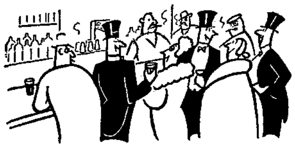
The next day, Wynn finally reached his dealer, and told him, "Bill, I think I'm going to ruin your day." The first word out of Acquavella's mouth was "*Nooo!*" Later that week, Wynn's wife, Elaine, took the painting to New York in Wynn's jet, where she and "Le Rêve" were met by an armored truck. Cohen met them at Acquavella's gallery, on East Seventy-ninth Street, and he agreed that the deal was off until the full extent of the damage could be ascertained. The contract, at any rate, was void.

The painting wound up in the hands of an art restorer, who has told Wynn that when he's done with it, in six or eight weeks, you won't be able to tell that Wynn's elbow passed through Marie-Thérèse Walter's left forearm.

Last Friday, when Wynn's alarm went off, at 7 A.M., his wife turned to him in bed and said, "I consider this whole thing to be a sign of fate. Please don't sell the picture." Later that morning, Wynn called Cohen and told him that he wanted to keep the painting, after all.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA
BOBBY FOREVER

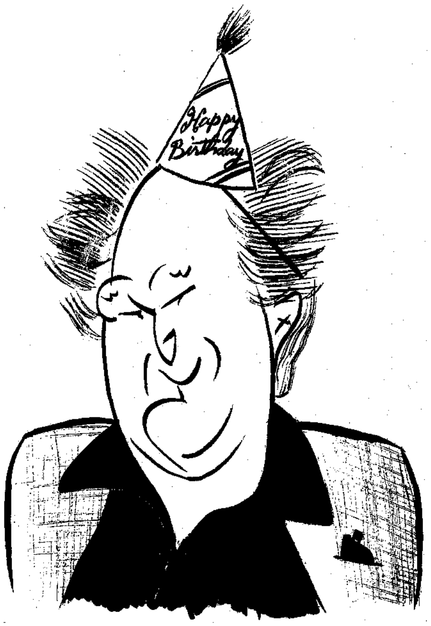


Well before the day of Bobby Zarem's surprise party, people were spilling the beans. It was the end of an average week for Zarem, the inveterate P.R. man: the première of "The Departed" was on Tuesday, followed by an event at Guastavino's with Scorsese, DiCaprio, and Damon; on Wednesday night, Zarem made an appearance at a cocktail party celebrating Jay McInerney's engagement to Anne Hearst; Thursday was more of the same—"Flyboys" screening, Elaine's for dinner. On Friday night, he went to a party for the opening of the New York Film Festival. Tavern on the Green was packed, and it seemed that everyone in the room suddenly wanted to wish Zarem a happy seventieth birthday. He asked one well-wisher where she'd got her information. "On the Internet," she said. Zarem, who is famous for his long, earnest pitch letters and personal phone calls to journalists, doesn't know much about the Internet. He usually lets his assistants work the computer. "I thought maybe it was one of the bloggers," he said.

The next day, an old friend called and asked Zarem if he would be at Elaine's that night. Zarem phoned Elaine Kaufman, the proprietor of the restaurant where he has eaten dinner two nights a week for forty-three years. "I said, 'Elaine, what's going on?' " And she told him: Bill Augustin, Zarem's chief assistant, had planned a party, despite explicit instructions not to. Augustin had sent an Evite to several hundred of his boss's closest friends. At first, Zarem was distressed. He joked that, in decades of parties at Elaine's, he couldn't remember one that he hadn't orchestrated himself. Then he gave in: "I decided, Fuck it—I'm just going to take a couple of puffs off a joint and relax."

Zarem was one of the first people to arrive. He stood near the door, pivoting in circles. He was wearing black New Balance sneakers and an untucked blue flannel shirt, and tufts of white hair protruded like wings from the sides of his head. Several guests had posted Evite regrets (from Eric Latzky, the P.R. director for the New York Philharmonic: "You look fabulous! Hope to see you soon"; from Christy Turlington: "Sadly, we will be out of town this weekend"), but dozens made it. "I'm just worried about everybody meeting everybody," Zarem said.

Another surprise party was already under way at the restaurant. In a side room, people crowded around a makeshift bar and danced under red, white, and green balloons. They said they were celebrating the sixtieth birthday of a real-estate man named Frankie Lingerie. Kelly Moore, Frankie Lingerie's girlfriend, explained that Frankie's last name was actually Longhitano, but his friends always called him Lingerie "because no one can pronounce his real name and because he loves the ladies." She wasn't aware of the other surprise party: "Bobby Zarem? I didn't know his birthday was tonight. He and Frankie are Libras, so they're in harmony. Libra is all about harmony." Frankie Lingerie, dressed in a black suit and a black shirt, seemed confused: "Bobby who?" "Bobby Zarem!" Moore said. "*You* know Bobby Zarem!" Frankie Lingerie nodded. "Oh, yeah. The white-haired guy. I know him from here."

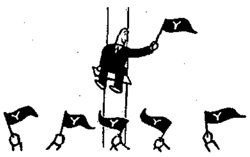


Bobby Zarem

Long after midnight, Zarem was still on his feet, kissing and hugging, accepting congratulations, introducing guests. Chris Forberg, the head of male modelling at the IMG agency, swept in with a small entourage. "Bobby is seventy going on forty," he said. "He goes out more than all my models put together." Jack Nicholson called from Los Angeles to order a bottle of Cristal, and Frankie Lingerie and his friends migrated to a back table near Zarem's, where they drank red wine and played with a roll of novelty masking tape (it had "Shut up!" printed on it). Zarem puckered his lips in thought. This was the place where everything had happened: where, years ago, he hosted a brunch to promote Schwarzenegger's "Pumping Iron" and Jacqueline Onassis showed up; where, by his own account, he dreamed up a crazy ad campaign called "I ♥ New York." He could not pin down the secret to his flair for public relations. “I don’t know,” he said. “I guess people like me. I’m a really nice guy. No, I really am. Now, did you meet Donna Dixon?” Dixon, the actress, who is the wife of Dan Aykroyd, was finishing a plate of spaghetti at a table in the corner. “It’s a day of celebration,” she said. “I never want to know what life is like without Bobby. Do you?”

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

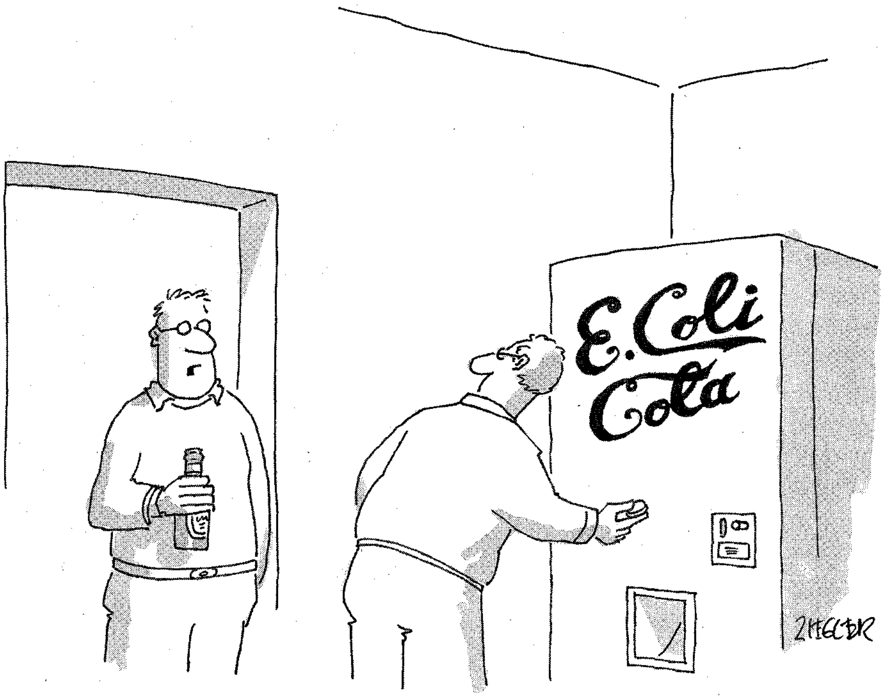
TOP THIS
ALEKSEY THE GREAT



Four and a half years ago, Jordan Bass, a freshman at Yale, met a tall blond Uzbek immigrant named Aleksey Garber—a prospective student who, in this era of increased specialization, stood out for his almost cartoonish well-roundedness: a twenty-first-century Renaissance man. Last week, Garber achieved notoriety when a job application that he’d submitted to investment banks was forwarded, with sarcastic glee (“Certainly one way to get your foot in the door . . .”), around the young-professionals circuit, but back in 2002 he was still a student at Manhattan’s Dwight School. He told Bass that he’d taught tennis to Jerry Seinfeld and Harrison Ford. He was a specialist in “Chinese orthopedic massage,” and had the business card to prove it. The Dalai Lama had apparently written his college recommendation.

The occasion for the Bass-Garber meeting was Bulldog Days, an annual event where high-school seniors who have been admitted to Yale descend on New Haven for a sample of collegiate life: beer-drinking, pizza, relentless a capella. Garber preferred to remain in the dorm and tell Yalies all about himself. “He talked for, like, six hours straight the first night,” Bass, who is now an editor at *McSweeney’s*, recalled the other day. “He had a lot of affiliations with élite institutions. He was an action star, an espionage expert, and a professional athlete. He would be on the C.I.A. firing range one day and, the next, at a martial-arts competition that took place in this secret system of tunnels underneath Woodstock, New York. Then he was at a skiing competition in Switzerland. He told us the Russian Mafia had him forging passports.”

One of Bass’s roommates began surreptitiously transcribing Garber’s James Bond-like stories. “He became kind of a circus attraction,” Bass said. “By the end of the weekend, we were bringing people over just to sit by him and listen.” Bass tried calling the number on Garber’s card, and reached an older-sounding woman. “It seemed like it might have been his mom, or something,” he said. Bass wrote an article for the campus tabloid, *Rumpus*, entitled “CRAAAZY PREFROSH LIES, IS JUST WEIRD.”



“Thanks, but I’ll just stick with beer.”

Garber decided to attend Yale anyway. (Upon arriving, he sent Bass an e-mail complaining that the *Rumpus* story belittled his Buddhism.) Since then, he has changed his last name to Vayner, and, at least by his own account, started modelling (he charges two hundred dollars an hour), written a book (“Women’s Silent Tears: A Unique Gendered Perspective on the Holocaust”), founded a charity for troubled kids, served as an adviser at an investment firm called Vayner Capital Management, taken up ballroom dancing (the international rumba is his specialty), won two games in a tennis match against Pete Sampras, retired from professional martial arts, and mastered the art of “bone-setting.” He is now a senior. He chose to include much of this information in his résumé, which referred potential employers to a short video depicting him at the gym (evidently, he bench-presses nearly five hundred pounds), serving a tennis ball (a hundred and forty miles an hour, or so it appears), skiing, ballroom-dancing, and splitting a stack of bricks with his bare hand.

On its face, Vayner’s C.V. may be the world’s greatest, which raises the question of why he’s looking for an entry-level finance position—the fallback for so many unremarkable Ivy Leaguers who lack dual backgrounds in espionage and Eastern medicine. When the e-mails started circulating, one blog, IvyGate, said it had uncovered a number of dubious coincidences: “Women’s Silent Tears” contains material that was lifted from an online Holocaust encyclopedia; Vayner’s charity (Youth Empowerment Strategies) shares its name with a New Jersey consultancy; and his investment firm borrows much of its mission statement from a company in Denver. (Vayner sent a cease-and-desist letter to IvyGate.) Meanwhile, Vayner’s legend grows, like that of a latter-day Paul Bunyan. Acquaintances report hearing that he is one of four people licensed to handle nuclear waste in the state of Connecticut, that he must register his hands as lethal weapons at airports, and even that he has killed two dozen men in Tibetan gladiatorial contests.

Never mind what’s apocryphal and what’s real in all this. Will the résumé get results? The advertising executive Donny Deutsch said on MSNBC that he was impressed. ("I would hire this guy sight unseen.") Yale alumni seem a little less so. On the listserv for the Class of 1970, for instance, a message with the subject "Sad and bizarre Yale story" linked to a blog where a man had attempted to diagnose Vayner's condition. "On the basis of the *DSM IV*, my point of view is that he is possibly a victim of histrionic personality disorder," the post read.

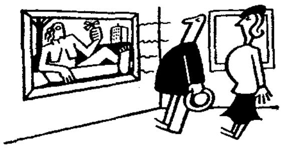
An alumnus replied to the message, suggesting mere borderline personality disorder, and adding, "It goes back almost to Freud, and it fits this guy like a counterfeit Armani suit."

Jordan Bass's father, as it happens, was in the Class of 1970. "It was my son who wrote the *Rumpus* piece," he wrote to everyone. "I recall, at the time, thinking that a guy with this level of grandiose and delusional thinking would either be homeless or president in twenty-five years."

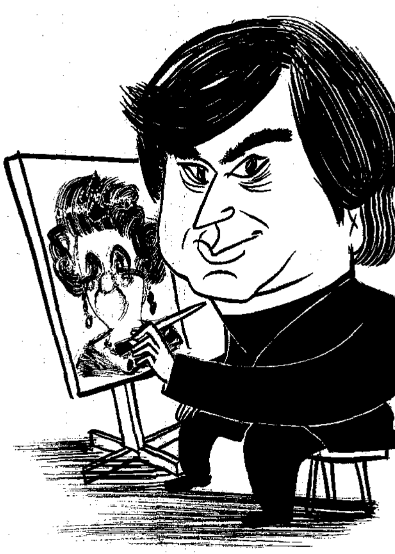
Yale has declined to comment on the situation. ("That's unfortunate," a spokeswoman said, when she was told that this magazine was running a story about Vayner.) Vayner did not return messages, but in his video, between athletic stunts, one can see him dressed in a business suit, giving an interview. "Success is a mental phenomenon, not a physical one," he says. "To achieve success, you must first conceive it, and believe in it."

—*Ben McGrath*

STUDIO VISIT
THE QUEEN, CONTINUED



On the floor of George Condo's studio on East Seventy-eighth Street, portraits of Queen Elizabeth II were laid out in rows of three: nine portraits, oil on canvas, each one sixteen inches wide by twenty inches high. The Surrealist distortions and grotesqueries familiar to viewers of Condo's "imaginary portraits" over the past twenty years were dominant in several of them—double or triple rows of teeth, clown noses, chins colliding with mouths, heads pierced by large carrots; others were likenesses of the monarch at different ages and in various moods. Condo was trying to decide which image, or images, to send over to London for his upcoming show at The Wrong Gallery, an itinerant, minuscule, nonprofit exhibition space that opened in New York four years ago, behind a glass door on West Twentieth Street, and which has now migrated to the third floor of the Tate Modern. On hand to help him choose were two of The Wrong Gallery's three founders, the artist Maurizio Cattelan and the curator Massimiliano Gioni. (The third, a freelance curator named Ali Subotnick, was in California.) The decision process progressed erratically.



George Condo

"Can you imagine them as stamps?" Cattelan said.

"Yes, yes," Gioni said. "So they can lick their queen." Both Cattelan and Gioni are Italian. Condo was born in 1957 in New Hampshire; he shows at the Luhring Augustine Gallery in Manhattan. He had been asked to do a single portrait, but over the course of three weeks, in a fit of inspiration, he had made at least fifteen. Everyone liked the nine-portrait grid, even though it was too big to fit at the Tate. "The tentative title is 'Dreams and Nightmares of the Queen,' " Condo said.

"When I asked George to do the show, he had this fantastic idea of painting her naked," Cattelan said.

"That was my first thought," Condo confirmed. "With a beautiful young body, so there would be lines around the block. But then we heard that you're not allowed to show members of the Royal Family nude in a public institution."

"Have you seen this new movie about the Queen?" Gioni said. (He was referring to the Stephen Frears film, starring Helen Mirren.) "In the first scene, she's sitting for her portrait."

"Now this one," Condo said, holding up a portrait of a very long-necked Elizabeth with a jewelled tiara, an ermine cape, and a sublimely goofy expression, "is a Velázquez."

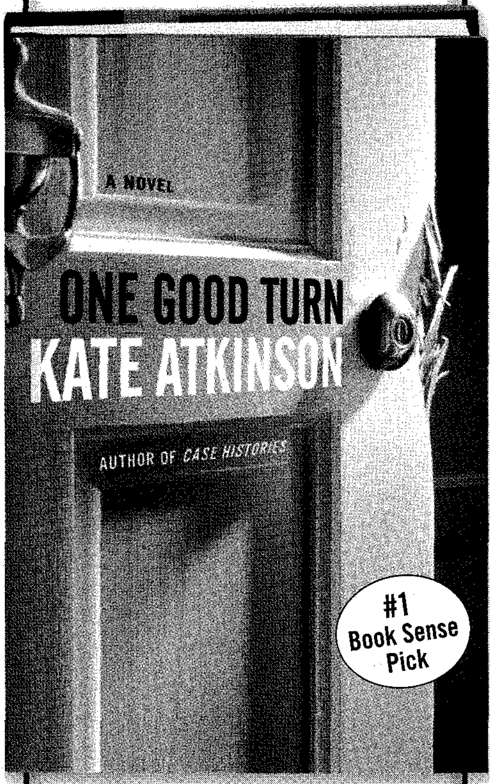
Laughter kept erupting as Condo rearranged the portraits in different combinations. "That's the wrong portrait, the one that doesn't look anything like her," he said. "I thought it might be the thing for The Wrong Gallery. This one looks like a Cabbage Patch doll." Asked how he had prepared himself for the commission, he said, "I just grabbed some books with pictures of her, and found out all sorts of little things, like she's the only person in the United Kingdom who's allowed to drive a car on a public street without a license plate. She's always smiling. Unfortunately for me, she never wears yellow-gold jewelry. She wears white gold, or platinum, or something—everything she wears is silver. She's got stainless-steel hair!"

After an hour or so, the men had narrowed their choices down to four portraits, arranged in a square. Two of them were Condo's typical distortions (including the Velázquez), and two were more or less recognizable: the Queen as a young woman, smiling in a side view, with one eye considerably larger than the other; and the Queen today, full-faced and close-up, with minimalist swatches of green above and below, suggesting coördinated hat and dress. "This one shows all she's been through," Condo said. "You know, Lady Di and all that, aging but still weathering the storm. I'm not trying to sell that as the main one, but it's hard to get around. Actually, I'd love to do a portrait of her for real—I'd love it if the Queen would summon me to the palace for a sitting. I keep saying to myself, while I'm painting, 'Why is God making me paint her this way? Why doesn't he want me to get this job painting the Queen's portrait from life?' "

Reached by telephone in London a day after the show opened last week, Condo said they had decided to go with a single portrait after all—the Velázquez. "I see it somehow as an over-all statement of the essence of royalty," he said. "The majestic, demented decadence of royalty."

—*Calvin Tomkins*

The new novel by
KATE ATKINSON,
author of *Case Histories,*
"is an absolute must-read."
—Harlan Coben, author of *Fade Away*



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ON THE AIR

ARRIBA!

A Latino radio scold gets out the vote.

BY DAN BAUM

Shortly before five o'clock one morning not long ago, a dozen people waited outside the locked glass door of a nondescript office building on West Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles. Sunrise was still an hour away. Teen-agers buried themselves against the chill in hooded cotton sweatshirts; an older woman wrapped herself tightly in an acrylic shawl. They hardly spoke; mostly they stared glumly at their feet. Inside, they knew, was the man they consider confessor, mentor, social worker, civic conscience, scold—Renán Almendárez Coello, better known to millions of Spanish-speaking radio listeners as El Cucuy de la Mañana (the Bogeyman of the Morning).

Brenda González, a round-faced teen-ager from East L.A., told me that eight days earlier her fifteen-year-old sister, Maria, had been struck in the head by a bullet while they were driving home from school. "When we opened the door, she was sideways, and her eyes were looking up at Heaven," she said. González wanted to ask El Cucuy to announce that the family was going to hold a car wash to help pay for funeral expenses. When González finished speaking, a big, sad-looking man in a cap embroidered with the Virgin Mary stepped forward and introduced himself, in Spanish, as Arturo Santos, from Guatemala. He said that his younger brother, Jorge José, had been shot dead on the street two days earlier, and he showed me a photograph of a long-haired man in a black leather jacket and sunglasses.

At that moment, a sharp-looking young man in an open-necked black shirt appeared on the other side of the glass door. After hesitating a moment, he let the entire crowd into the lobby. He walked me to the elevator and introduced himself as Ernesto de Santiago, a member of El Cucuy's small on-air cast. As the door closed, he gestured toward the cluster of people and said, "*Así es, diario.*" This is how it is, every day.

When we arrived at the top floor, de Santiago led me through a door marked with a lit "On Air" sign, and we stepped into a large room filled with light and noise. At a central island of computer screens, control panels, and microphones on stalks sat a stocky, animated man wearing headphones: El Cucuy. Almendárez, who is fifty-two, is short, with longish shiny black hair, a boyish smile, and features that suggest both the Native American Indian and the Spanish roots of his birthplace, Honduras. He wore a lime-green shirt, a blue tie, and a red-and-black floral-printed satin vest. Around him, several young men and women were laughing and shouting in Spanish into microphones of their own. The din was overwhelming: canned laughter, an instrumental version of "La Bamba," barking dogs, crowing roosters, gongs. On the walls hung American flags, a rendering of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and many posters featuring Almendárez's beaming face.

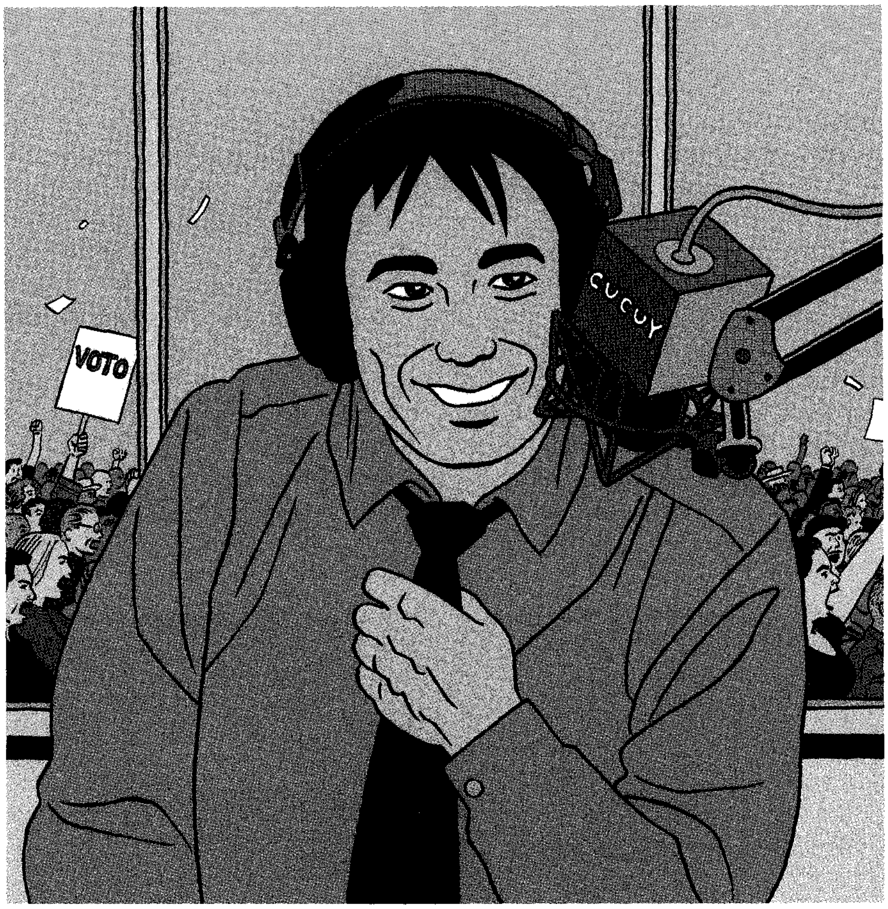
"One hundred and fifty-eight days until Christmas Eve!" he shouted above the din. "One hundred and sixty-five days until New Year's!" After some noise and laughter, he punched a button; the music switched to soulful Andean flutes and, in a whiplash change of mood, he dropped his voice to a whisper. "A thought for the blind," he breathed. "These people develop senses different from our own. While the wise ones stumble against a wall, the uneducated, the irresolute, the lazy, and the conformist remain peacefully in the corner." He pushed another button, a recorded crowd applauded, and he underwent another flash personality transformation. "Get up!" he shouted, throwing his arms in the air. "Getting up is only the start! We face thousands of challenges!"

Almendárez's morning show, which has been on the air since 1989, and on KLAX La Raza since 2004, is a seven-hour torrent of puns, pranks, and play-acting, with the loopy mood and cacophonous, somewhat forced hilarity of a drunken office party. It is one of the biggest Spanish radio shows in the nation, which helps make KLAX one of the top radio stations—in any language—in Los Angeles. As many as three million people listen to El Cucuy every weekday from four to eleven and Saturdays from five to ten. Most shows begin with the deafening burr of an alarm clock and Almendárez yelling, "*Arriba! Arriba! Arriba! Arriba! Arriba! Arriba!*" Up! Up! Up! Up! Up! Up! "This is why we came to the United States!" he shouts. "To work!" The show's demographic is broad: the program runs ads for Toyotas, Lasik eye surgery, and Disneyland vacations, as well as for Office Depot and "the perfect diet." Through KLAX's owner, Spanish Broadcasting Service, El Cucuy also broadcasts to, among other places, Denver; Seattle; Tulsa; San Francisco; Atlanta; Salt Lake City; Minneapolis; Jackson, Mississippi; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Medford, Oregon; and Greenville, South Carolina.

Almendárez is Latino America's cheerleader. "Hello, construction workers, garbagemen!" he says. "Hello to those who work in the strawberry fields, in the vineyards, in the lettuce fields!" He is also the community's self-appointed father figure, and, as such, he can be patronizing. "I told you: you follow me, and I'll guide you" is a favorite refrain. His "grand crusade," which he mentions several times in the course of every show, is "Votos por America," a campaign to register a million new voters.

After a couple of hours of energetic banter, de Santiago handed Almendárez a slip of paper about the people waiting in the lobby. "Have they eaten anything?" Almendárez whispered. He reached for a leather fanny pack and pulled out a hundred-dollar bill. "Get them some breakfast." A short time later, the crew set up Arturo Santos, the man whose brother had been killed two days before, in a room with a phone, next door to the studio. When Almendárez answered his call, Santos exhaled a bottomless sigh. He said that his brother had been eating tacos at an open-air stand in L.A.'s Koreatown, when someone opened fire with a shotgun from a moving car, striking him in the heart. "Your brother wasn't a gang member or anything?" Almendárez asked.

JAIME HERNANDEZ



"Help yourself, so that I may help you," Renán Almendárez Coello says.

"No, no, no, no, no. He was a good worker, not a gang member."

Almendárez pressed Santos for the exact location of the shooting; he seemed eager to warn his listeners about an intersection to avoid at night. "Normandie and Eighth," Santos said. "By the freeway entrance? Where Western crosses? A lot of Hispanics live there." Almendárez asked what else he could do for him, and Santos shyly said that he needed help repatriating his brother's body to Guatemala. At that moment, a gravelly voiced women called Señora Ahumada came on and said that she would help with the arrangements.

Later, Almendárez heard from Brenda González, the young woman whose sister had been murdered, and, after a great deal of sympathetic murmuring—"Because the paths of God aren't straight, they wind among rocks and thorns"—he again introduced the mysterious Señora Ahumada. "We've spoken to the funeral home where she is," Ahumada said, in the same gravelly voice. "The cemetery, too. Everything will be arranged." (The family later declined the help, though they did hold a car wash.)

Señora Ahumada turned out to be Maria Ahumada, a sixty-year-old Mexican-American who first got involved with the show eleven years ago when, working as the office manager in a law firm, she heard a young woman call in to Almendárez's show and get bad advice. Though she is not a lawyer, she says that her intervention helped the woman win a two-million-dollar settlement. Ahumada quickly became a regular on the Cucuy show, helping people navigate bureaucracies, communicate with doctors and lawyers, and get answers to their questions. "I'd call an office that was giving some poor immigrant the runaround and make them pay attention," she told me. "Often people are afraid to push. They think Immigration will trace their call and deport them." Before long, Ahumada was receiving offers of services from Los Angeles businesses, and, in 2000, she established a tax-exempt foundation—unaffiliated with KLAX—to provide financial help for listeners as well. "All these people need is a voice," she told me. "Renán is that voice."

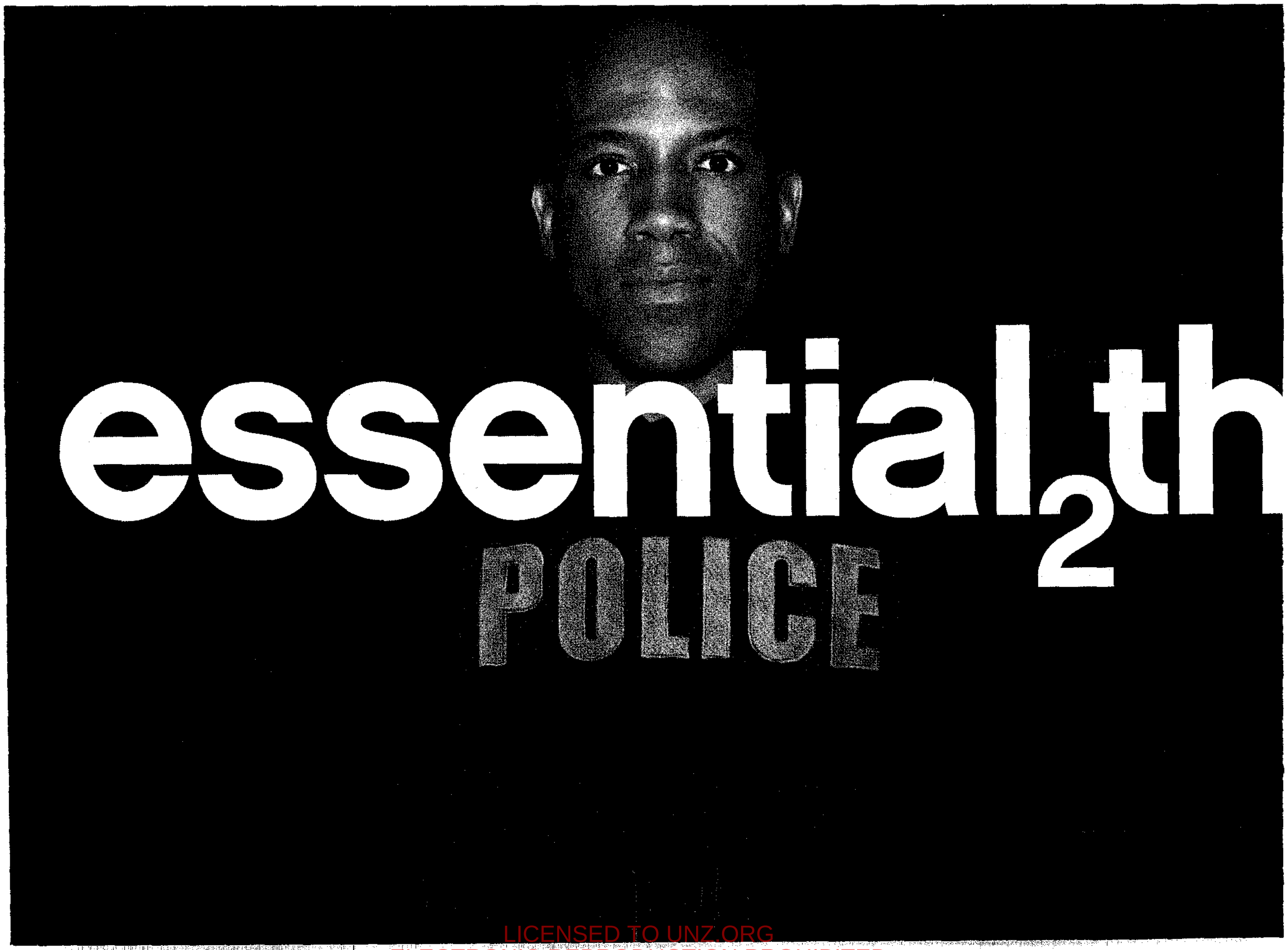
A disk jockey at a sister station in San Francisco broke into the show to tell

Almendárez about a nineteen-year-old named Michael who had been killed in Van Nuys the night before. "We are all Latinos! We are all Hispanics!" the boy's father wailed when Almendárez patched him in. "We are from different countries, yes, from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico, but why do we have to kill ourselves? Why are so many young people losing their lives, why are there so many who don't have the least fear of God?"

"God has chosen you for this," Almendárez told the weeping father. "You will live through it, and be strong for others." He motioned to the sound engineer, who handed him a worn Spanish paperback titled "Guide for the Modern Orator." The book bristled with yellow Post-Its. One, marked "for a dead spouse," indicated a poem called "In the Same Grave"; "How Will I Forget Her?" was "for a dead daughter"; and "Upon Separating" was "for a betraying woman." Almendárez opened the book to "My Son," a poem by the Chilean folksinger Tito Fernández. He hit a button that brought up a syrupy piano-and-violin tune reminiscent of a soap-opera soundtrack. "Every time I remember my son, I get a pain inside my chest," Almendárez began reading. He continued for nine stanzas. Then, when the poem was over, he leaned into the microphone with eyes half shut, set aside the book, and began to riff in the voice of the father. "Mike was in love, as I was when I was his age," he said softly. "I was only out looking for the woman who would be his mother, who would share her love with him, and with me. . . ." His extemporaneous monologue lasted five minutes.

De Santiago held up a handwritten sign—"Comerciales"—but Almendárez ignored him. "How I miss my son! How I miss my boy!" Almendárez wailed. His voice dropped to a whisper, punctuated with sobs. De Santiago, in his sharp black shirt, sniffled and reached for Kleenex, as did the engineer and Mayra Berenice, who reads the traffic report. As Almendárez finished, his voice barely audible, he reached for a roll of toilet paper to dry his streaming eyes. He leaned into the microphone again, eyes closed, and whispered as though into a lover's ear, "Above, there is a God, and Mike has gone to him. May God now be merciful to me and my wife, so that one day, from the depths of our souls, without forgetting our son, we may soothe our pain." A few bars of a love ballad, with swelling violins, came on. Then an announcer cut in with a carnival barker's bleat: "Don't go away! In a few moments we'll be back with the show 'El Cucuy de la Mañana'!"

American radio stations have been broadcasting in Spanish for more than sixty years. In the past two decades, the number of Spanish-language stations has grown tenfold, to seven hundred, making "Spanish-formatted" the fifth-biggest radio category. (It just edged out "music-intensive religious.") Immigrants now constitute more than twelve per cent of the population, and the nation's forty million Hispanics,



whether immigrant or native-born, are now the largest minority in the U.S. They also listen to the radio more than non-Hispanics do—three hours a week more—perhaps because they often work in places where it's O.K. to have a radio playing.

The Hispanic *locutores* of today—like immigrant radio hosts from the past—both strengthen the culture of origin and help to hasten assimilation. "This kind of thing—I hate to use the words 'multicultural diversity'—in broadcasting is unique to the United States," Henry Sapoznik, an American cultural historian, said. "There is no corollary, even in Canada or England or other countries with big immigrant populations. In every other country, to get access to radio, you needed political power. Here all you needed was money."

Carlos Alcázar, the president of Hispanic Communications Network, a media company based in Washington, D.C., says that there is a disjunction between what Latinos listen to in their own countries and what the big media companies offer them in the United States. "In any country in Latin America, the highest-rated shows on the radio are political-debate shows," he said. "They're not entertainment-based programs." He considers the noisy American style of Latino broadcasting not just reductive but also outmoded. On his company's programs, including an hour-long public-affairs show that is partly funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, his staff interviews Spanish-speaking senators and activists for broadcast on public radio. "There's a perception that there's no interest among Latinos in news analysis," Eduardo López, the show's urbane Salvadoran producer, said. "But education, the economy, the minimum wage, wiretapping—who makes more overseas calls than immigrants? We've discussed planning a future segment about the war in Iraq because the Department of Defense has declared that it's going to recruit heavily among Latinos. We're trying, for the first time, to break Spanish into the quiet, serious environment of public radio."

Almendárez, meanwhile, invokes God as often as a Christian broadcaster on the English-language dial. The United States can be a cold, frenetic, dollar-chasing world: *puro reloj*—nothing but the clock—is the way Latin Americans often describe life north of the border. *Norteamericanos*, in their feverish desire to control every detail of the present and even the future, often seem to Hispanics to lack a fundamental faith. Almendárez appears at such religious occasions as the Crossing of the Virgin at Mission Dolores in San Francisco, and he encourages church attendance. "What happens in your neighborhood if they give Spanish-language Masses and you don't go? Pretty soon, if nobody shows up, they cut out the Spanish Masses."

The piety of Almendárez's show is laced with mild raunchiness. He is sometimes called the Hispanic Howard Stern, though his sexual humor is much

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tamer. One day, he joked with his engineer and mostly male crew about the odd places where they had had sex. "For me," he said, "safe sex is making sure the car doors are locked." As usual, Almendárez negotiates between the Latino way of thinking—with a strong undercurrent of machismo—and a more modern, *norteamericano* way that brings women in on the joke. One morning, he fielded a call from a young Hispanic woman in Park City, Utah, who told of trying to enjoy her first sexual experience beside a road that was streaming with Mormons "on some kind of pilgrimage." "I couldn't concentrate!" she cried. Almendárez kept her on the phone for five minutes, alternating between sympathetic murmurs and punching the laugh-track button.

Almendárez, however, spends most of his time instructing listeners in the practical minutiae of life in the United States. He tells them how to obtain immigration forms, how to fill them out, and how to register to vote. He urges the undocumented to get documented, the documented to get a green card, those with green cards to become citizens, and those who are citizens to vote. "You have to be optimistic," he said on a typical show. "And you have to work, paying attention to those holy and blessed words: Help yourself, so that I may help you."

"Many people say you shouldn't answer the census," he said one day, and then affected a high, panic-stricken voice: "Don't take part in the census! Don't fill out that paper! Noooo! Don't you see that you are undocumented?" He resumed his normal voice: "But the census is completely separate from Immigration. If you answer, and the government knows that on this street live so many Hispanics, so many people, they'll put a school here, a park there, an added bus route." Even the jokes and skits contain subtle messages about the peculiarities of the United States—that you have to carry change for parking meters and toll roads, that you have to pay for the food in hotel refrigerators, that when you buy furniture on time and miss a payment somebody will show up at your door.

Eddie Sotelo, a Mexican who broadcasts on KSCA La Nueva every morning as Piolín—Tweety Bird—and is Almendárez's biggest competitor in Los Angeles, also attempts to explain the bureaucratic mysteries of El Norte. If a listener calls in trying to find out, say, how to get treatment for drug addiction, Sotelo's staff, working on laptops, researches the question quickly and Sotelo repeats the information on the air. Like Almendárez, he focusses on the complexities of obtaining legal-immigrant status. "Information is so hard to get," he said. Sotelo, who twenty years ago came to the United States illegally, dodging Border Patrol helicopters across the Southern California desert, is now planning to become a citizen. "I'm going to take my listeners all through the process," he told me. "I'm going to show them every step of the way." Sotelo and his cast close each segment of their show with a call-and-response: "Why did we come to this country?" "To succeed!"

Almendárez is careful to keep his show nonpartisan. He hasn't invited the Republican governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, to his studio, he told me, because "I don't want to have to hide my feelings and I don't want those feelings on the show." Berenice, the traffic-news reader, leaned over to whisper that Almendárez had declined to be photographed with President Bush when he visited the White House for a dinner with Hispanic leaders, a few years ago. "He went and got photographed with the portrait of President Kennedy instead," she said. Yet, at the same time, Almendárez's message—work hard, become legal, pay taxes, vote—would please even the most anti-immigrant conservative. Almendárez told me that he sees no contradiction. "We may both want immigrants to succeed, but we differ on how hard we should make it," he said. "I think it should be easier, not harder."

Almendárez himself took a soft route to the United States. In the eighties, as a young announcer on Honduran national radio, he interviewed the American Ambassador to Tegucigalpa, John D. Negroponte, who is now the director of

National Intelligence. Soon after, Negroponte arranged a visa for him, and Almendárez moved to Los Angeles. He married a Mexican woman named Virginia Peliyo, and they have three daughters: Francia, Italia, and Irlanda. He became a U.S. citizen in 2000, twenty-four years after his arrival.

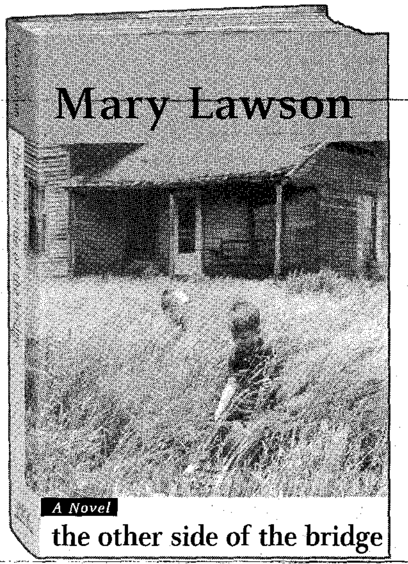
For all the talk about becoming American, Almendárez never exhorts his listeners to learn English. The closest I heard him come to promoting English was an advertisement he aired for Inglés sin Barreras—English Without Barriers—which warned that new immigration laws would require better English. It ended with a note of encouragement: "Listen, if you made it across the border you can make it over the barriers to English." Almendárez, however, has never studied English, and still speaks it haltingly. "I'm crazy. It was a caprice of mine," he told me. "I had some idea that if I learned English my daughters wouldn't speak Spanish. So they speak Spanish with me and English with their Mexican mother and with each other." He said that immigrants should learn English. "The conservatives are right about that." But then he winked and said, "I *oprimo el número dos*. In reality, you can live well in America without English."

As recently as five years ago, crossing the border was easy enough so that Mexicans could view the United States as a kind of high-wage zone of their own country. They would venture north for a few months to take jobs as roofers and dishwashers, and return home with presents at Christmastime. They'd continue the cycle until they'd earned enough cash to get married or to start a business in Mexico. Many had no intention of staying in the United States, or of becoming American citizens. After September 11, 2001, border enforcement grew more stringent; immigrants can no longer count on being able to go back and forth. The number of immigrants in the United States—overwhelmingly from Mexico—continues to rise (an astounding sixteen per cent over the past five years), and the new barriers to crossing the border seem to have changed their attitudes about staying permanently in the United States. In August, the latest month for which the government has figures, twenty-six per cent more people applied for citizenship than had done so in the previous August. (Citizenship applications also spiked in 1994, when California passed Proposition 187, which barred illegal immigrants from receiving state-funded health care or from sending their children to public school.) "Whenever there's an anti-immigrant backlash, people lose their ambivalence about becoming Americans," Clarissa Martinez De Castro, of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic-rights organization, said. "They figure they're here, they're rooted in the community, they're working, and, because they feel excluded by the backlash, that creates an incentive to take that last step."

On December 16th of last year, the House of Representatives passed the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, or HR 4437. Almendárez and many others call it simply "the Sensenbrenner bill," after the Wisconsin Republican F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., its principal author. The bill authorized a seven-hundred-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border. But its most incendiary passages would require state and local law-enforcement agents to turn over to federal authorities any undocumented immigrants they encounter, and would make it a felony to assist illegal immigrants in any way that might be construed as helping them stay in the United States. Churches and charities, in principle, could be penalized for providing food or shelter.

In response to the Sensenbrenner bill, a coalition of churches and immigrants' rights groups in Los Angeles began planning a demonstration for March 25th, and Almendárez and the other *locutores* began denouncing the bill on the air; Almendárez has said at least once that it "offends God." Sotelo invited several d.j.s from other stations to call in to his show so that they could promote the protest together. "It's a peaceful march, a civilized march, an organized march," Sotelo said, as El Mandril (the Baboon) and El Gordo (the Fat Man) chimed in. "We have to support each other," El Gordo said. "If they take away all the wetbacks, who is going to listen to us? But, seriously, this isn't about radio stations and competition. It's about something bigger." The *locutores* urged their listeners to wear white, and to carry American

"[A] note-perfect tale of coming of age in Northern Canada, as beautiful as the landscape is stark."*



In THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE, *stolid Arthur and his quicksilver brother Jake's lifelong mutual resentments and betrayals explode in a novel of sibling rivalry, jealousy and obsession, hailed as* **"a deftly interwoven story of love and loss"** (*Kirkus Reviews,* Starred Review*).

"In this follow-up to her acclaimed *Crow Lake,* **Lawson again explores the moral quandries of life...**[in] a world...where beauty and harshness are inextricably intertwined."

—*Publishers Weekly*

Mary Lawson's *New York Times* bestselling debut novel, *Crow Lake,* was selected as a *New York Times* "Notable Book" and named a "Best Book of the Year" by *The Washington Post* and *Publishers Weekly.*

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flags. "Don't forget to march with us! People!" Almendárez said several days before the march. "We'll be leaving from Broadway and Olympic, and end up in front of the City Hall of Los Angeles, the first day of spring, to protest this terrible law, HR 4437, that practically turns the undocumented into criminals."

On March 25th, the English-speaking population of Los Angeles was largely surprised to find more than half a million demonstrators in the streets—one of the largest demonstrations in the city's history—wearing white and carrying American flags. "We cannot criminalize people who are working, people who are contributing to our economy and contributing to the nation," Los Angeles's mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, told the crowd. In demonstrations over the next couple of weeks, thousands of people also marched in Denver, Seattle, and Atlanta—all cities where Almendárez broadcasts.

A national "Day Without an Immigrant," intended to demonstrate the country's reliance on immigrant labor, and promoted heavily by Almendárez and the other *locutores*, was held on May 1st. In a spot recorded over a rousing brass rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner," Almendárez said, "We will be totally united in a day of action—four o'clock in the afternoon, from MacArthur Park to the little park at La Brea—to say no to the anti-immigrant laws and yes to the legalization of twelve million of our undocumented countrymen. Wear your white shirt, carry your American flag. We wait for you with open arms. We are the working class. We are in the United States to work. And also the students—go to school, and afterward support us! All united, we will make the difference."

Factories and businesses closed across the country, schools reported high rates of absenteeism, and crops went unpicked throughout California, as hundreds of thousands of immigrants boycotted work to march in about seventy cities, including Providence, Rhode Island, and Salem, Oregon. In Los Angeles, Almendárez marched at the head of about half a million people, alongside Cardinal Roger Mahoney.

A third big march was planned for Labor Day, but Almendárez did not participate, nor did he urge his listeners to march, which may explain why only a thousand people turned out in Los Angeles. "We've already marched," he said. "Now it's time to vote."

SON

Memory buries its own,
And of what now forever must be
The longest day of his life
What mostly remained was a blur
Under too bright lights—so he
Could scarcely tell if the things
Sharpest in his mind were
Nothing but fantasies, sewn
Afterwards, out of grief,
And guilt's imaginings.

Yet it seemed memory called up
(After the interminable birth,
As his finger stroked the arm
Of a child who would not last
Even one whole day
And all of its time on earth
Ministered to by vast
Machines that couldn't mend the harm
In a single transcription slip
In reams of DNA)

A look so haunted, so
Haunting, he would not confess
(Not even later, to his wife)
How it stayed with him, on him: the slow
Flicker in a watery eye,
The mute call—through all
The exhausted hopefulness
The condemned come to know
In the end—from animal to animal,
Imploring, *Please save my life.*

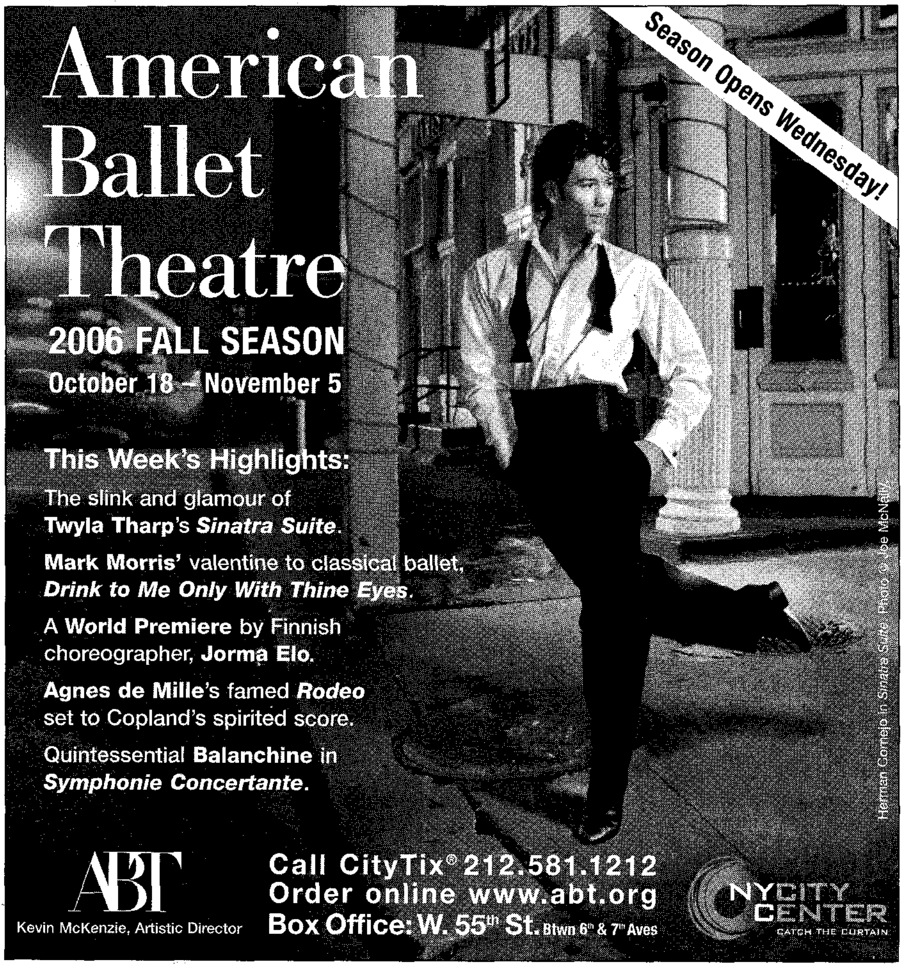
—Brad Leithauser

In August, Almendárez took his Votos por America crusade on the road, in a big red bus festooned with images of his face—the Cucuymovíl. He and eleven crew members travelled to ten cities, broadcasting from affiliate stations, and occasionally from a little studio built into the back of the bus. At six o'clock on the morning of August 10th, Almendárez was wearing an "I ♥ NY" T-shirt and pacing the sidewalk beside the Cucuymovíl, which was parked in front of the Natives Restaurant on Northern Boulevard in Jackson Heights, Queens. Inside the restaurant, several hosts of the New York station 93.1 El Amor were broadcasting from long folding tables. Around them, staff members of the Hispanic Federation, a nonprofit organization devoted to Hispanic rights, set up stacks of voter-registration cards and sipped from bowls of Colombian hot chocolate. More than a quarter of Queens's population is Hispanic, and the Natives, which also houses a theatre where Caribbean musicians perform, is a center of neighborhood life. Almendárez had been working since before dawn, making guest appearances on El Amor and signing autographs, then returning to the Cucuymovíl to broadcast his own show to Los Angeles and elsewhere. "We are here in New York to continue our grand crusade, Votos por America!" Almendárez yelled into the microphone. Pedestrians peered curiously into the bus's big picture window, and the Q66 Flushing bus roared past in a cloud of black diesel smoke. "We have been to San Diego, San Francisco, Tucson, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Atlanta—aye, that was a long drive, thirty hours!—Chicago, and, now, New York! We are trying to register one million new voters!"

Over the next six hours, Almendárez hosted Andy Andy—the popular Dominican singer Angel Villalona—a string of *locutores* from El Amor and other New York Spanish-language stations, and a crew from the New York bureau of the Spanish-language television network Telemundo. At one point, nine people packed themselves into the bus's eight-by-eight-foot studio. Around ten o'clock, Hiram Monserrate, a former N.Y.P.D. officer of Puerto Rican origin who represents the Jackson Heights area on the New York City Council, showed up to urge listeners to become legal residents, and, if they already were, to become citizens and vote. "If you're not legal, you get no disability, retirement, or Social Security benefits," Monserrate, who was then running for a seat in the state Senate, said in crisp Spanish. "You have people here twenty-five and thirty years entitled to nothing."

"That's right," Almendárez said. "The Asians have good salaries, health benefits, everything—because they vote." Pouring sweat, and hoarse from shouting, he took a call on the bus from a listener who asked him whether he objected to the term "illegal" for immigrants without visas or work permits.

"I don't like 'illegal' or even 'undocumented,' and 'wetback' even less," Almendárez said, and touched a button to silence, for a moment, all the laughter and the sound effects. "There are just those who haven't yet arranged their papers." He paused long enough to wolf down a couple of tortillas from a foil package, while an ad for Travelocity.com blared jarringly in English. "Brothers, sisters," Almendárez said, leaning into the microphone and brushing crumbs from his chest. "I am not political. It doesn't matter to me who you vote for. When you put your ballot in the ballot box, all of us are equal—rich, poor, white, Hispanic, Asian, skinny, ugly. But follow me here: we Hispanics do everything in this country. We clean the buildings. We build the roads. We pick the crops. The only thing we don't do is vote." ♦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Herman Cornejo in *Sinatra Suite*. Photo © Joe McNally.

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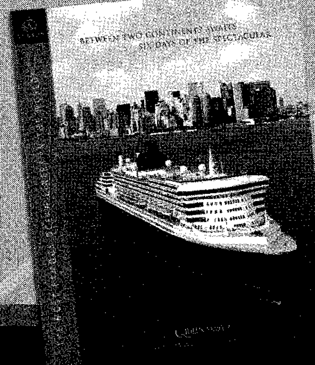

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THIEVES ARE EVERYWHERE

BY JASON ROEDER

This holiday season, millions of Americans will go on vacation, a gamble that plays right into the twitchy hands of the pickpocket and the double-jointed brain of the con artist. The only way to protect yourself, of course, is to cultivate a debilitating fear of humanity and never leave your basement. But if you must travel, if you simply cannot face your co-workers without having been entertained by a killer whale, then keep in mind what the criminals have in store for you:

THE UNEXPECTED TAILOR

A common scam on subways. You suddenly notice a man kneeling before you and pinning a cuff at the bottom of your pant leg. When he's finished, he blandly says, "If you want to leave those trousers with me, I can probably have 'em hemmed in a few hours." Not so fast! Do you remember hiring a tailor for your subway ride? Didn't think so. See, this swindler is hoping you'll give him your pants and forget that your wallet is still in the back pocket.

THE SHUTTERBUG

In this ploy, the crook pretends to be a friendly local who offers to take a free Polaroid of your money. And he even follows through with shots of your cash snorkeling or wearing a funny native hat. But it's usually too late by the time you realize that your photographer chum has actually swapped the pictures of your money for the real thing. There's nothing more embarrassing than being told by a cashier that your photo of a twenty-dollar bill admiring Nubian art cannot be accepted as payment.

THE SWAYZE SACK

Passersby are told that, for only a quarter, they can peek inside a sack that contains Patrick Swayze. The bag handler slowly unties the binding, pausing to pick at a troublesome knot for extra drama. Meanwhile, the onlookers, as their anticipation increases, don't realize that their pockets are being picked. And, as if that weren't bad enough, half the time Swayze isn't even in the sack.

GUESS YOUR HANDS

You give a buck to the operator of the Guess Your Hands booth, and he says, "O.K., go ahead." Then you say, "Me? I thought you were going to guess my hands." Then he says, "Nope. The sign reads 'Guess Your Hands.'" Then you say, "But why did I just pay you? And what does it mean to guess someone's hands, anyway?" Then he says, "I figured you knew." Then you say, "Well, I don't want to guess your hands." Then he says, "You sure came to the wrong place, pal. Read the sign." At some point during this exchange, the booth operator's sidekick sneaks up and steals your wallet.

SAY, WOULD YOU MIND PUTTING ALL YOUR VALUABLES INTO THIS SHOPPING BAG AND NEVER TELLING ANYONE, EVEN THE PEOPLE YOU TRUST MOST IN THE WORLD?

Most people do not fall for this. Those who do, do so more than once.

THE DARK ALLEY POP

In this con, typically aimed at solo travellers in isolated areas, a thief pops the victim on the back of the head and then patiently waits for him to regain consciousness. When the victim comes to, his assailant helps him to his feet and dusts him off. Then he kneels down and begins pinning a cuff at the bottom of the victim's pant leg. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the Portola (Calif.) Reporter.

In Blairsden, a caller reported that she could hear a woman screaming. A deputy said that it was possibly a mountain lion.

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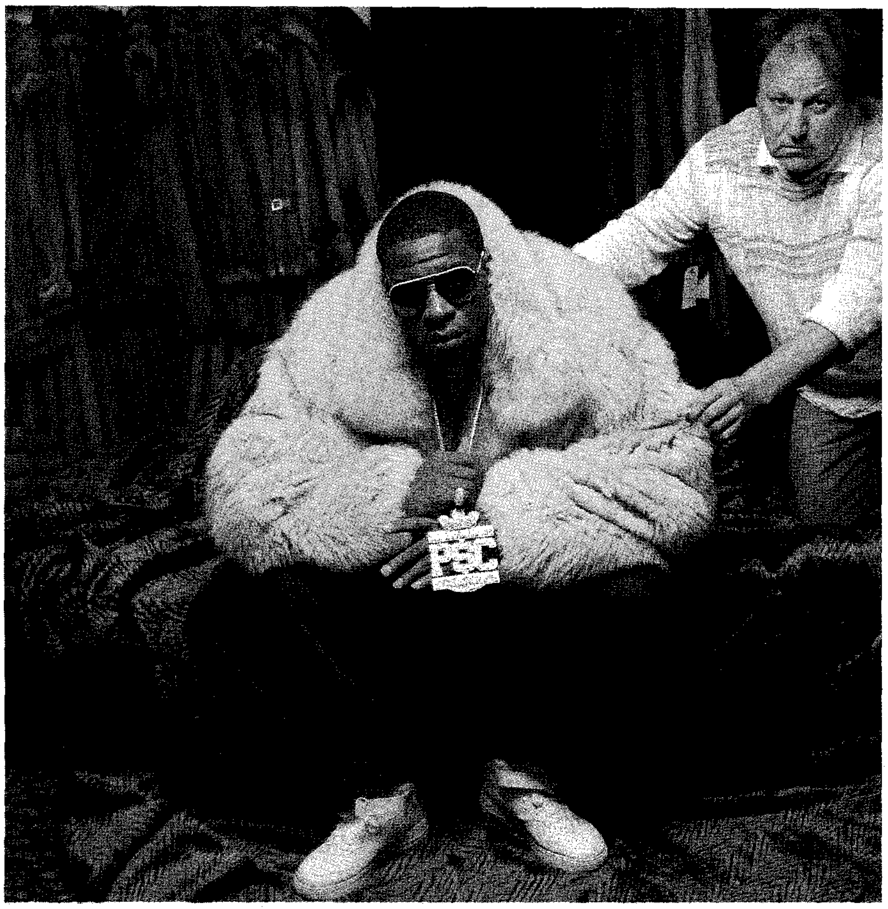
OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

MINK INC.

How Ervin Rosenfeld sewed up the hip-hop crowd.

BY LAUREN COLLINS



Rosenfeld in his shop with his client Young Dro. Photograph by Josef Astor.

A few years ago, Ervin Rosenfeld was asked to make a mink jacket for the Bronx rapper Fat Joe. This would not be just any mink jacket; it had to be the pale blue of a Tiffany box, light as champagne fizz, and flattering to a man who was said to weigh three hundred and seventy pounds. Equipped with Fat Joe's favorite North Face parka as a template, Rosenfeld set to work on the garment, for a video called "We Thuggin'." He tracked down a skin, a white ranched female mink, and had it dyed the requested hue; after stitching the pieces together, he cut up pillows and stuffed the material between the fur and the lining, to get a quilted effect. The resulting creation, a size-XXXXXL bomber jacket, was ready for delivery in three days. But there was a problem. Fat Joe was indeed so fat that Rosenfeld didn't have enough blue mink left to fulfill the other half of the commission. Never mind that the video was set on Memorial Day, in Miami; the R. & B. singer R. Kelly was meant to appear alongside Fat Joe in an identical coat.

Rosenfeld decided to go for what passes in his œuvre for minimalism. He snipped the sleeves off the pattern, leaving the armholes huge and gaping, and attached a pouch of mink at the back of the collar. Voilà. He had invented the sleeveless fur hoodie. It's a look still spoken of reverentially in certain quarters ("*Nobody* was doing those before he was," a former music executive told me recently), but that was only the beginning. Rosenfeld still had to figure out how to handle the part of the video in which Fat Joe, having just rapped that he's "got the mink on/same color [as] the Range," belly flops into a swimming pool. "I did a little trick," he said the other day, in his Manhattan shop. "Instead of destroying the mink, I made a rabbit coat of the same color, and Fat Joe jumped in wearing that."

Asked why he didn't just make a rabbit coat in the first place, Rosenfeld scoffed. "These guys don't want to be caught dead in rabbit," he said.

His assistant chimed in, "It's like a Volkswagen, or a Pinto."

Possessed equally of Old World trade skills and a new-school appreciation for the preposterously extravagant, Rosenfeld is the hip-hop world's preferred furrier, having made pieces for Sean (Diddy) Combs (formerly known as Puffy), Usher, and Nas. He is fifty-five, with a downy bouffant and a kingly air. He manages to be both macho (gold chain, bellicose phone manner, lots of "sweetheart"s) and puckish (short legs, barrel chest, girly tote bag). For now, his official base of operations is a dingy rented storefront on West Twenty-ninth Street. He used to have a nicer showroom across the street, but he sold the building after September 11, 2001. The shabbiness of the new place doesn't seem to bother him much, in part because fur is just one of his domains. On any given day, he moves between the Fur District, the two restaurants that he co-owns in Brooklyn and SoHo, and his house on Staten Island, leaving a trail of reverberating ring tones—*Hello, Moto!*

Even back in the eighties, when neighboring furriers would spread alarm down the block, Paul Revere style, if a black person showed up, Rosenfeld welcomed shoppers of all colors and creeds. (His other main constituency is Orthodox Jewish women.) "Some customers, a black couple with a child, thought they weren't being taken care of one day," he said recently. "So I took a blade and I said, 'Cut me. The color of the blood's the same.' The guy bought pieces for himself and his wife and became one of my best customers." Aundray Hill, a hair stylist in Queens, used to patronize James McQuay, a well-known black furrier, but Rosenfeld won him over with his solicitousness. "The first time I went in, he treated me with respect,” Hill said. “I’ve dealt with some Caucasian people where I feel they have their eyebrow up, looking at me like, ‘What you really about?’ ”

Rosenfeld first got involved with the hip-hop world in the late nineties, when stylists for rap videos started coming around to borrow clothes for shoots. The stylist Misa Hylton-Brim, for instance, introduced him to Combs, her boyfriend at the time, and to Lil’ Kim (for whom he made a fur bikini). A number of the rappers liked the borrowed pieces, and bought them, and Rosenfeld’s business grew by word of mouth. “Sometimes they would mention who the coat was made by in *Vibe*,” he said. He added that his famous customers appreciate that he isn’t trying to become their friend. He doesn’t ask for photographs with the clients and he berates assistants who do. “I don’t blab,” he said.

Mainly, the entertainment crowd is drawn to Rosenfeld’s one-of-a-kind designs—outré fantasias of zebra stripes, tie-dye, camouflage, or whatever happens to stoke his creative impulses. “I’ll be driving down the street and I’ll look at something—a shoe, a sign, a flower arrangement—and then I’ll incorporate it into a coat,” he said. When a customer enters the showroom, Rosenfeld will pluck from a rack a sweeping maroon mink robe appliquéd with elongated, lipsticked faces: “This is based on a Picasso exhibit.” Next, he’ll brandish a double-breasted coat of streaky bluish kolinsky, the small rodent beloved of the Russian tsars: “From a pair of stonewashed jeans.” Or a cobalt Astrakhan vest adorned with a sequinned fire-breathing dragon: “I cannot sell normal stuff.” The rap crowd seems to share Rosenfeld’s sensibility. “The hip-hop customer is fashion-forward,” he said. “If he’s wearing red sneakers, he wants a red coat to match them. And tomorrow he buys green sneakers and he wants to do green.”

Or, perhaps, like Baby from the group Cash Money Millionaires, he wants some party clothes for his children. Rosenfeld can do a little jumper with a pleated skirt, stitching a gold mink Teddy bear on one pocket and a fuzzy pink rose on the other. Craig Grant, a Harlem music producer, told me, “Any happenin’ party, you want to go to in an Ervin fur—for showboating. Even Puffy’s baby mother goes to Ervin.”

Several years ago, Combs himself decided to include some fur pieces in his Sean Jean fashion show. “He was working with all these big fancy designers from England, France,” Rosenfeld said. “When he realized I know what I’m doing, he scrapped the whole thing.” Rosenfeld says that he and Combs spent a weekend feverishly selecting skins and colors in Combs’s Chelsea studio. “We were working late,” Rosenfeld recalled, “and I said, ‘Puffy, I promised my daughter I’d be home.’ He called her and he left a message: ‘This is Puffy. Your dad’s with me. Please holla back, or else.’ ”

Grandiose hip-hop stars are fun, but they can be unreliable bread and butter. As Rosenfeld says, “Often, they don’t like to pay, these famous people.” About twenty per cent of his clientele, accounting for forty per cent of his business, are Orthodox women from Brooklyn, drawn to Rosenfeld by his knack for a becoming fit, even faced with the bulky broadtails and tanukis that suit New York winters. (The civilian contingent dominates the guest book that Rosenfeld keeps in his showroom: Baroness von Bressendorf, Leona Weinstein, Shanta Chapman, Sheri—“Yaakov’s wife.”) “One of my gifts is that I know what looks right on every person,” he says. “I make up my mind the moment they walk in, and if they choose something wrong I won’t let them have it.”

On a woozy day in July—a month that is to furriers what late April is to accountants—Rosenfeld was waiting in his shop for a fitting with a Mrs. Weber, who, he said, was “the wife of a very religious man.” Rosenfeld was converting her outdated mink coat into a reversible sheared-mink mackintosh. “Her friends are going to think she just got a brand-new coat,” he said.

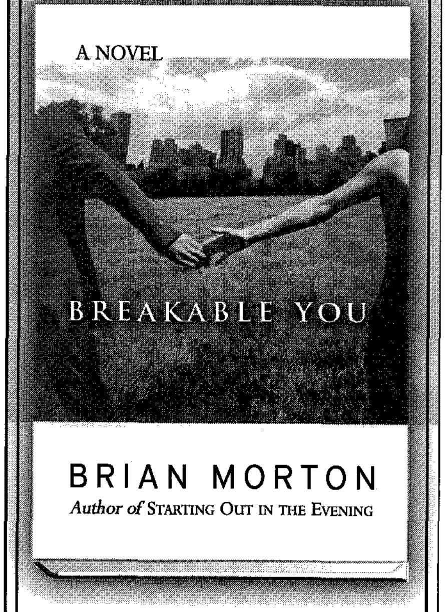
At two o’clock, Mrs. Weber arrived at the showroom. Rosenfeld asked an assistant to fetch her new raincoat. After a few theatrical flourishes of the garment, he helped Mrs. Weber into it, arm by arm.

“First year, if you lose weight I’ll fix it for nothing, ’cause I’m usually right,” he said.

“It’s so big,” Mrs. Weber said.

“Listen to me,” Rosenfeld began, his

“Remarkable....”*



“A tribute to Morton’s craft: conjuring up lives so vivid the reader mourns their passing.”
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voice rising. "If you still feel it's big when you put a winter suit on under it, it's very easy for me to make it smaller!"

Rosenfeld's success lies as much in his grasp of the nuances of female psychology as in his technical abilities. He doesn't flatter his customers so much as he cows them with manly assuredness. When Mrs. Weber complained, later, that the coat made her look heavy, he erupted: "You are not fat, so stop doing this! I'll pull someone in off the street and show you fat!"

The relationship between a furrier and his client is an intimate one, the creation of a fur coat being as ritualized a process as the fitting of a first bra. Custom dictates that a furrier provide storage and cleaning facilities, make free alterations to a garment's hem and sleeves, and perform all tailoring on approval. Once a made-to-order coat passes muster, the furrier marks it with a monogram of the buyer's choosing. In "How to Maintain and Buy a Fur Coat," the authors, Leslie Goldin and Kalia Lulow, recommend a monogram that is "small, classic, and elegant." Rosenfeld's ladies prefer initials. His hip-hop people tend toward nicknames, like Pretty and Killer, or basketball hoops with their initials whooshing through the net. Once, a man bought a mink from Rosenfeld and asked him to inscribe it "To the Best Lay in Town."

At the atelier, Rosenfeld was on his knees, fussing with Mrs. Weber's hem and trying to persuade her to go a little bit shorter. "Don't forget, you have three other things from me," he said.

Mrs. Weber dabbed at her neck with a handkerchief. "Why am I doing this again?"

"Just to have something *different*."

Mrs. Weber broke into Yiddish, and began discussing a *bekishe*, or ceremonial garment, that someone she knew had ordered, lined with fur, as a gift for a rabbi. "Borough Park politics gives you business," she said.

"I made a *shtreimel* out of real Russian sable—it was beautiful," Rosenfeld said.

"How do you keep up with the fashion?" Mrs. Weber asked, laughing.

Rosenfeld answered, "The higher *shpitz* is in. It's like with my hip-hop customers. I have to keep up with the *shtreimel*, but in reverse."

A few weeks later, Mrs. Weber stopped by the shop with her sister, Mrs. Stern, who wanted to get a jump on a Swakara skirt suit for an engagement party in December.

Mrs. Stern and Mrs. Weber went over to Rosenfeld's desk and began riffling through a pile of unfinished furs—called "skins" in the business—assessing them for warmth and pliability and lustre. The privilege of vetting their own skins is one of the main reasons that people choose to work with Rosenfeld, rather than buy something off the rack at, say, Maximilian. Mateen Kane, a former music executive who is one of Rosenfeld's best customers, explained it like this: "I was messin' with some other furriers, but when you go to Ervin he doesn't try to sell you a coat. He shows you skins first. Everybody else is stockpilin' coats like they're a supermarket."

Rosenfeld pressed Mrs. Weber to decide whether she wanted buttons, a bracelet cuff, and fur on one or both sides of the collar of her mackintosh. Making a fur coat, it soon became clear, can be as complicated as buying a car. Should the guard hairs be left long for dramatic effect, or sheared to accentuate the pelage? Do you carry a heavy shoulder bag, or ride in a car that has velour upholstery? If so, avoid the delicate long-hairs: mole, ermine, fisher, fox. So you've settled on a marten: American, stone, or baum?

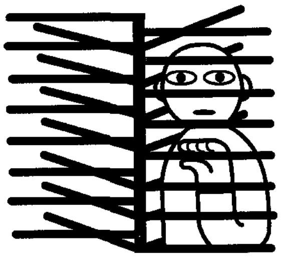
"I want it sporty," Mrs. Weber said. "How you do it is your problem. Should I give you something now?"

"If you want. It's up to you."

Mrs. Weber pulled out a Gucci checkbook and wrote a check.

"Thank you very much," Rosenfeld said. "Have a nice Shabbos."

Several minutes later, a busty woman wearing tangerine velour Capri pants and a matching short-sleeved sweatshirt burst through the door. She tossed a slightly mangy rabbit coat Rosenfeld's way. "Store this and fix the rip on the brown one—it's a piece of shit, anyway."



"So it's time for a new one?" Rosenfeld asked.

"I want the whiskey red," the woman said. "I'll get it when I come back from Saratoga."

Rosenfeld likes to say that he got into the fur business because he enjoys being around beautiful women. That is not exactly true. He was born on New Year's Day, 1951, in Gherla, a provincial trading town in Transylvania. His father was one of fourteen children, and his mother was one of twenty-one. His paternal forebears had dealt in skins for many generations, travelling to the famous Easter auctions in Leipzig and returning with fox, lynx, and broadtail pelts to resell to local artisans.

Rosenfeld's parents, native Transylvanians, had both survived imprisonment in concentration camps. In 1947, when the Communists seized power, Rosenfeld's mother's old house was made into a hospital, and the family was forced to live in three rooms. Rosenfeld was drafted into the Junior Communists, and he remembers with distaste being obliged to wear the *cravata*, a red bandanna that had to be tied in a uniform knot. When he was fourteen, the family left Gherla with three suitcases. They ended up in Rome, in a one-room shack on Via Agostino Depretis. Though he spoke no Italian, Rosenfeld adapted quickly. ("Take me to any country and I will pick up the language in six weeks," he says. In addition to English, he speaks fluent Romanian, Hungarian, Yiddish, Italian, and Spanish, as well as some French, Russian, and German.) Eventually, he found a job at the flea market in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. "A guy was paying me five hundred lire a day to help out," he said. "After three weeks, I was paying *him* just to let me hang around there, because I was doing my own business. I was trading jeans, cigarettes, magazines—anything I could." At night, he would sneak out and raid the city's fountains for coins.

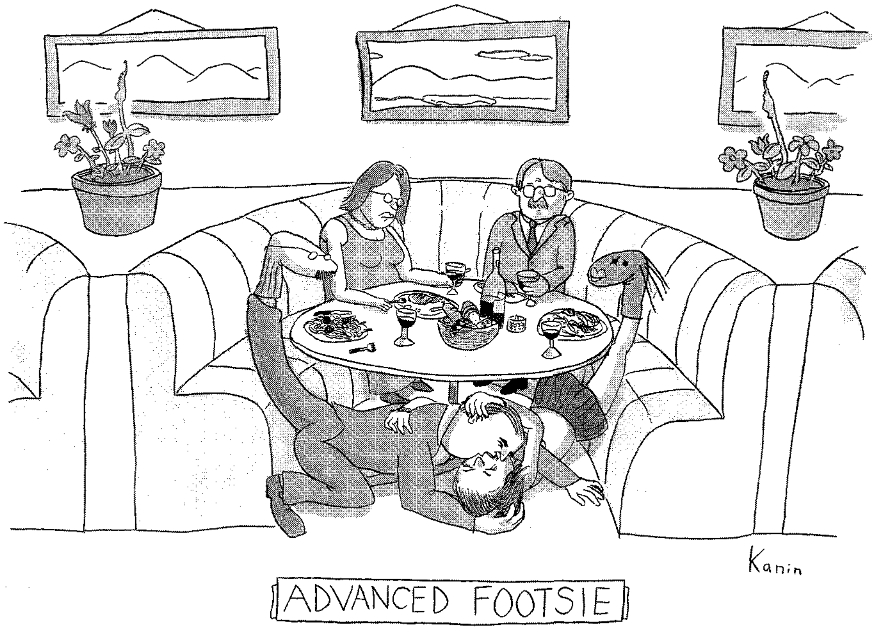
In December, 1964, Rosenfeld touched down at John F. Kennedy International Airport. After staying for a few days with a distant relative, he found a place in Borough Park, enrolled in New Utrecht High School, and talked his way into a job waiting tables at a deli.

"This way, I didn't have to cook and I made money," he says. In time, his parents joined him. "My father and I," Rosenfeld recalled, "we heard that someone's moving to Florida and they're giving away their furniture. We went by bus to East Flatbush and dragged it back on a sled." (Junk collecting is, to this day, one of Rosenfeld's favorite hobbies, and an auxiliary outlet for his artistic energies. A few years ago, he accumulated too much stuff and decided to dig a hole and bury it all in his back yard.)

Rosenfeld went on to Brooklyn College, and, in 1972, he married Clara Fischer, the daughter of a family friend. He thought about being a lawyer, or an art teacher, before going into business with his father-in-law, Emmanuel Fischer, who operated a fur-manufacturing workshop on West Twenty-ninth Street. Within months of bringing Rosenfeld into the business, Fischer died. Rosenfeld had to catch up fast. "I was embarrassed that I wasn't the best," he recalled, "so I stayed up nights and experimented."

Recently, he took me to a fifth-floor garret in the Fur District, much like the one where he used to work. Fur balls covered the floor like dust bunnies, and in the background one could hear the metallic trilling of a rotary phone. The pelts of eight minks—paws and heads lopped off—having been slit open lengthwise and moistened, were nailed to a table. When they dried, they would be trimmed, sliced into four-millimetre strips, hand-fed into a special sewing machine, squared, shaped, closed, and thrown into a huge spinning drum to make them soft again. This is the partial beginning of a let-out mink coat, which requires between fifty and sixty animals. It is rare for a fur designer to have firsthand experience in the dressing and dyeing processes, and Rosenfeld's expertise gives him an advantage in realizing his most far-out visions.

Fur, as a commodity and as a craft, is a complex alloy of the life sciences, history, geography, geometry, draftsmanship, speculation, and art. The industry's stakes are heightened by the preciousness of the raw materials and a pronounced market volatility. Even in 1700, Governor Bellomont, of New York, was sounding the death knell of the fur market. "The beaver trade, here and at Boston is sunk to little or nothing," he wrote. That year, England exported 69,432 beaver hats; by 1750, the number had rebounded to more than eight hundred and forty thousand. As one merchant told Agnes C. Laut, the author of the 1932 book "The Fur Trade of America," "Of all the world's industries, fur trading is the oldest, the trickiest, the most technical, subject to the most shifts of whim and finance. It is a game for wise old wolves, not new tenderfeet and fly-by-night gamblers."



Rosenfeld's clients are devoted to him, and many of them appear at his door each year, as soon as there's a chill in the air. Last week, Brian Grant, a corrections officer, double-parked outside the shop and left his girlfriend waiting in the car. He popped into the store carrying a light-brown zip-up men's mink jacket with a herringbone pattern. Rosenfeld had based it on some brickwork he liked.

"How long ago did I make this for you?" Rosenfeld asked.

"This is, like, two years old," Grant said. "You know, I had to go through hell and hot water with that girl to get it."

The two men decided to nip the coat's waist, and Grant said, "You know what I want? Remember that fox I put on last year? I think you said you made one for—"

"That was for one of the Denver Nuggets," Rosenfeld said. He brought out the jacket, which was so voluminous that it looked almost as if it were made of feathers.

"I love this jacket," Grant said. "It's hot. When you walk into a place with this, you're definitely going to be noticed." He thought for a minute. "Yeah, this is hot," he repeated, before running to the front of the shop and leaning out the door.

"You gotta see the one I'm gonna get!" he yelled to his girlfriend, who leaped out of the car and came inside.

"What about me?" she asked Rosenfeld.

"We'll make a matching one for you," he said.

"That thing looks crazy," she said, squinting at Grant, who sidled up to her and began doing dance steps.

"*You* ain't got to like it," he said. "*I* like it."

"You look like a bear."

Rosenfeld interrupted. "He's a Teddy bear. Don't you call him Teddy bear once in a while?"

"I used to."

One might think that a furrier pursuing the hip-hop market would maintain a high-rolling image. But even in a business that has long relied on clever marketing (as early as 1887, someone figured out that "Hudson seal" sounded better than "muskrat") Rosenfeld evinces an indifference to publicity that borders on the masochistic: he doesn't advertise or have a Web site; the soundtrack to the Ervin experience is as likely to be 1010 WINS as it is a disco remix of "MacArthur Park." He says that he ran with a wild crowd for a while in his twenties and thirties, but he tired of it. (There's a red Bentley Turbo sitting under tarps at his house.) Every once in a while, he'll show up at a boxing match or an N.B.A. All-Star game, but more often he's tinkering at home. (This summer, he designed and built an ornamental fountain for his patio—complete with real and plastic goldfish, yuccas, and a piece of scavenged iron fence—that is almost as baroque as one of his furs.) About as close as he comes to promotion is displaying a white military coat, similar to one he made for Combs for an awards show, on a wire hanger behind his desk.

Still, on a hot Saturday night this summer, Rosenfeld agreed to close off the back garden of Pane e Vino, his restaurant in Cobble Hill, for a birthday barbecue for Mateen Kane. Kane, who left the music business to become an investor ("Too much rippin' and runnin'—you can't lose with real estate"), owns a sufficient number of Rosenfeld furs to render him a sort of human trunk show. That week, he'd just returned from Los Angeles, where he'd hung out at "the Murder Inc. mansion" and discussed the possibility of Rosenfeld's collaborating on a fur line with former members of the now defunct hip-hop label. "They agreed to it, but there's nothing written in stone yet," he said. "I'm just waiting for them to get back at us."

Kane and Rosenfeld met seven years ago, over a Swakara lamb; more recently, they've been dabbling in investment properties in Baltimore. That night, Kane was wearing beige linen pants, a billowing camp shirt, Gucci trainers, and a Kangol fishing hat printed with Eiffel Towers. He flicked his wrist to show a chunky diamond bracelet. "This is the first piece I ever bought from Jacob"—Jacob (the Jeweler) Arabo, a maker of watches and diamond pieces favored by rappers. "I paid thirteen thousand dollars for it." (In June, Arabo was arrested on federal money-laundering charges. The cash apparently came from drug sales made by a Detroit gang called the Black Mafia Family.) Kane went on, "After you get your bling, you got to get your coat. A lot of people know that Ervin is the man."

Rosenfeld was running back and forth between the kitchen and the garden, insuring the swift dispatch of platters of grilled salmon and chicken parmigiana. Slow jams emanated from wall-mounted speakers, and there was an ice luge in the shape of a pit bull. Kane's crowd aren't drinkers, but, in keeping with the party spirit, guests were chugging Martinelli's sparkling cider straight from the bottle.

Kane began cataloguing some of his favorite coats. "I have an acid-washed bluejean shearling," he said. "Ervin made it as a cape for Mary J. Blige when she was on tour, and I called and said, 'I want that.'" For fall, he and Rosenfeld were planning a jean-style jacket made from kangaroo.

Kane had helped one of the guests, Farmer, a barber from Maryland, to procure the latest look. "I said, 'Ervin, he wants a coat with over two hundred colors on it.' " The result was a zip-front mink jacket modelled on a Coogi sweater. "It's so flashy," Farmer said. "Everywhere I go, people are touching it." Kane turned, gestured sweepingly, and said, "We've bought over two hundred coats from him, me and my circle."

"For the love of God, is there a doctor in the house?"

Rosenfeld sometimes worries that the fur business has changed irrevocably. "It used to be you gave a coat to your mistress," he said. "Now the cleaning lady, she has a mink." Consumers, he says, don't know the difference between a fine handmade piece and mass-produced Hong Kong junk; the Russians, who used to pull out wads of cash separated with rubber bands—"pink for fifties, yellow for hundreds"—are all label-crazy now; he is concerned that his competitors are targeting the hip-hop market as a cynical way of unloading inferior product at high prices.

"I'll show you something that really bugs me a lot," he said, flipping through *Fashion Rocks* (a supplement distributed with the September issues of many Condé Nast magazines) and pointing to a picture of André 3000 in a shapeless fur. "They're talking about he's stylish. That's embarrassing for me. These new fur guys are selling to people who have no idea—hangers-on from the old neighborhood who, because they don't have anything else to do, refer their rapper friends to people who are, sadly, not worthy of having them as clients. That raccoon coat in the picture—nine-hundred-dollar garbage that he probably paid a lot of money for."

When the MTV Video Music Awards aired, a few nights later, Rosenfeld spent four hours watching, hoping to get a sense of what styles the rappers would favor for the upcoming season. "Nobody wore a stitch of fur," he reported dejectedly upon arriving at his office the next morning.

Ten minutes later, there was a buzz at the door.

"Is there anybody around here who buys coats?" a young woman asked, proffering a full-length silver fox.

"Why are you selling it?" Rosenfeld asked her.

"I'm doing the whole animal-rights thing," she said.

"Then give it to the animals!" Rosenfeld barked. ("I think that they are taking advantage of every old lady who has a poodle and sends in her money," he said later, of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.) When the woman with the silver fox was halfway down the block, he could still be heard muttering, "Animals. *Animals!*"

Given the encroachments of his competitors upon the hip-hop market and the cramped conditions of his showroom, Rosenfeld is thinking of moving to Harlem. He's been scouting locations and looking for a local partner, maybe someone from a hair salon ("That's a great source of customers") who could set up a mini-spa inside the store in exchange for keeping shop. "What I want to do now," he told me, "is a sort of brownstone scenario for men and women, where it's very exclusive. I want to be able to take someone, almost in a sense like a homeless woman, and make her into a princess—from underwear to makeup to a leather outfit. Do one in each major city—London, Paris, Rome—and then you franchise it. You make an appointment to come in, you sit in a cobblestone courtyard and have a cup of coffee or a glass of champagne and talk about what you like."

Rosenfeld had been put uncomfortably in mind of the urgency of his relocation plan when Young Dro, a twenty-seven-year-old Southern rapper, dropped by the shop with some friends. His début single, "Shoulder Lean," had just reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot R. & B./Hip-Hop chart. The retinue had ordered in omelettes and hash browns, but there was nowhere in the cramped space to sit and eat. Rosenfeld's desk, in his tiny back office, had to be commandeered as a makeshift buffet. Young Dro was in an expansive mood. He had just made a surprise cameo in his collaborator T.I.'s performance at the V.M.A.s, and he had on a white tracksuit, aviator glasses, gold grills, and a "Pimp Squad Click—25 to Life" medallion, an outfit identical to the one he'd worn the night before on the show.

"That white one's cool," he said, pointing above his head to a snowy seventies-style mink with a natural chinchilla collar.

"Just pull it down by the sleeve," Rosenfeld instructed.

Young Dro shook his head no, and Rosenfeld walked over and gave the coat a yank. "Careful!" Young Dro yelped, as if someone had stomped on his toe. "That thing is bee-yooooooo-ti-ful." He slipped into it and mugged in front of a three-way mirror. "I might have to buy this. How much do you want for it?"

"It's five thousand, but I'll give it to you for three," Rosenfeld said.

"Two and a half—I'll get it right now," Young Dro said, as a couple of female fans, peering through the window, squealed and broke into song: "'Let ya shoulder lean / Ay get it right'!"

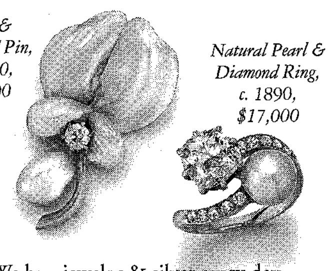
Young Dro walked over to a rack of velvety chinchillas and tried on a gray one. "Every last one of them fits me—I'll be broke," he said. His enthusiasm for the chinchilla wavered—"I like more of a pecan brown"—and he paced the room, sucking on his teeth, until eventually he made his way back to the white mink.

"It's nice, seriously," he said to Rosenfeld, and pulled out a debit card emblazoned with the Atlanta Falcons logo. "How about I buy the coat and just have you send it?"

"Fine."

"Two and a half?"

Rosenfeld nodded. "If that has to do it for you. Never say no to your friends." ♦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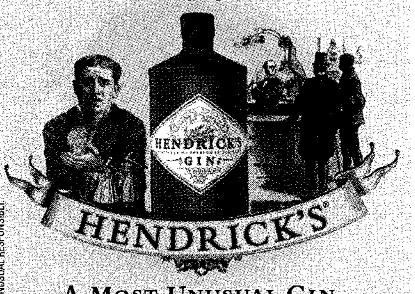
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LIFE AND LETTERS

REWRITING NATURE

Charles Darwin, natural novelist.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Darwin's Delay is by now nearly as famous as Hamlet's, and involves a similar cast of characters: a family ghost, an unhappy lover, and a lot of men digging up old bones. Although it ends with vindication and fame, rather than with slaughter and self-knowledge, it was resolved by language, too—by inner soliloquy forcing itself out into the world, except that in this case the inner voice had the certainties and the outer one the hesitations.

The delay set in between Darwin's first intimations of his Great Idea, the idea of evolution by natural selection, in the eighteen-thirties (he was already toying with it during his famous voyage on the H.M.S. Beagle), and the publication of "On the Origin of Species," in 1859. By legend, the two events were in the long run one: Darwin saw the adapted beaks of his many finches, brooded on what they meant, came up with a theory, sought evidence for it, and was prodded into print at last by an unwelcome letter from an obscure naturalist named Alfred Russel Wallace, who had managed to arrive at the same idea.

It seems to have been more complicated than that. One reason Darwin spent so long getting ready to write his masterpiece without getting it written was that he knew what it would mean for faith and life, and, as Janet Browne's now standard biography makes plain, he was frightened about being attacked by the powerful and the bigoted. Darwin was not a brave man—had the Inquisition been in place in Britain, he never would have published—but he wasn't a humble man or a cautious thinker, either. He sensed that his account would end any intellectually credible idea of divine creation, and he wanted to break belief without harming the believer, particularly his wife, Emma, whom he loved devotedly and with whom he had shared, before he sat down to write, a private tragedy that seemed tolerable to her only through faith. The problem he faced was also a rhetorical one: how to say something that had never been said before in a way that made it sound like something everybody had always known—how to make an idea potentially scary and subversive sound as sane and straightforward as he believed it to be.

He did it, and doing it was, in some part, a triumph of style. Darwin is the one indisputably great scientist whose scientific work is still read by amateurs. As Edward O. Wilson points out in his introduction to "From So Simple a Beginning," a new, single-volume edition of four essential Darwin volumes—"The Voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle" (1845), "On the Origin of Species" (1859), "The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex" (1871), and "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals" (1872)—we still read Darwin to get a sense of what Darwinism is all about, in a way that we cannot read, say, Newton or Galileo to understand physics. (Wilson also supplies annotation to the texts, and an afterword that argues eloquently for "scientific humanism" as an alternative to religious dogma.) Of course, the theory of evolution by natural selection would have been true even if it had been scratched in Morse code on the head of a needle. But it would not then be *Darwinism:* a "view of life," in its author's words, not an ideology. (An ideology has axioms and algorithms; a view of life has approaches and approximations.)

Darwin was not a writer just by inclination; he was, uniquely among the great scientists, an author by trade. His books, even some of the most technical ones, were published by a commercial publisher, and he was subject to the same trials as other writers: editors who cut too much, royalty statements that show too little. And Wilson's collection, read right through, shows that Darwin really was one of the great natural English prose stylists. He wasn't a "poet" in that vaguely humane sense of someone who has a nice way with an image; he was a man who knew how to cast his thesis into a succession of incidents, so that action and argument become one. And, as with all good writing, the traces of a lifetime's struggles for sense and sanity remain on the page. Reading Darwin as a writer shows us a craftsman of enormous resource and a lot of quiet mischief. But it can also remind us that recent efforts to humanize him—to assure readers that the truth is not so hard to take; that Darwinism does not expel us into a void of cold chance—are unnecessary. The most humane and poetic side of Darwinism is already there, because he put it there when he wrote it down.

Charles Darwin was a conventional man from an unconventional background. His grandfathers, Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood, were, as Jenny Uglow shows in her beautiful book "The Lunar Men" (2002), close to the beating heart of the North of England Enlightenment in its most progressive phase. In the reaction that overwhelmed the country after the French Revolution, their circles were persecuted, but the family tradition remained one of plain speech and free thinking.

Yet Darwin also went to some lengths to make himself seem just another Victorian gentleman-naturalist, ear pressed to the ground for the rumble of obedient earthworms. He lived in the country on an independent in-

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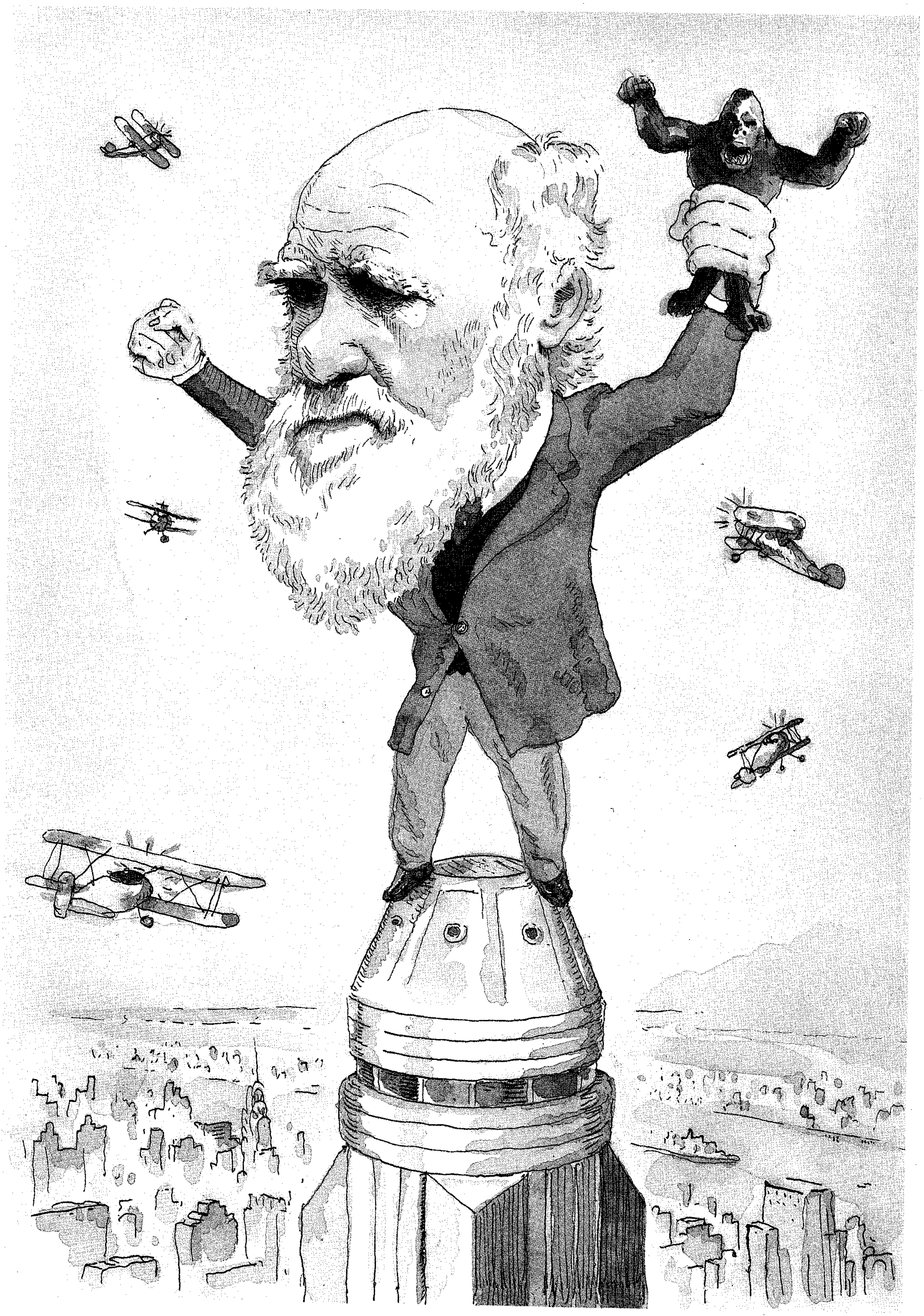

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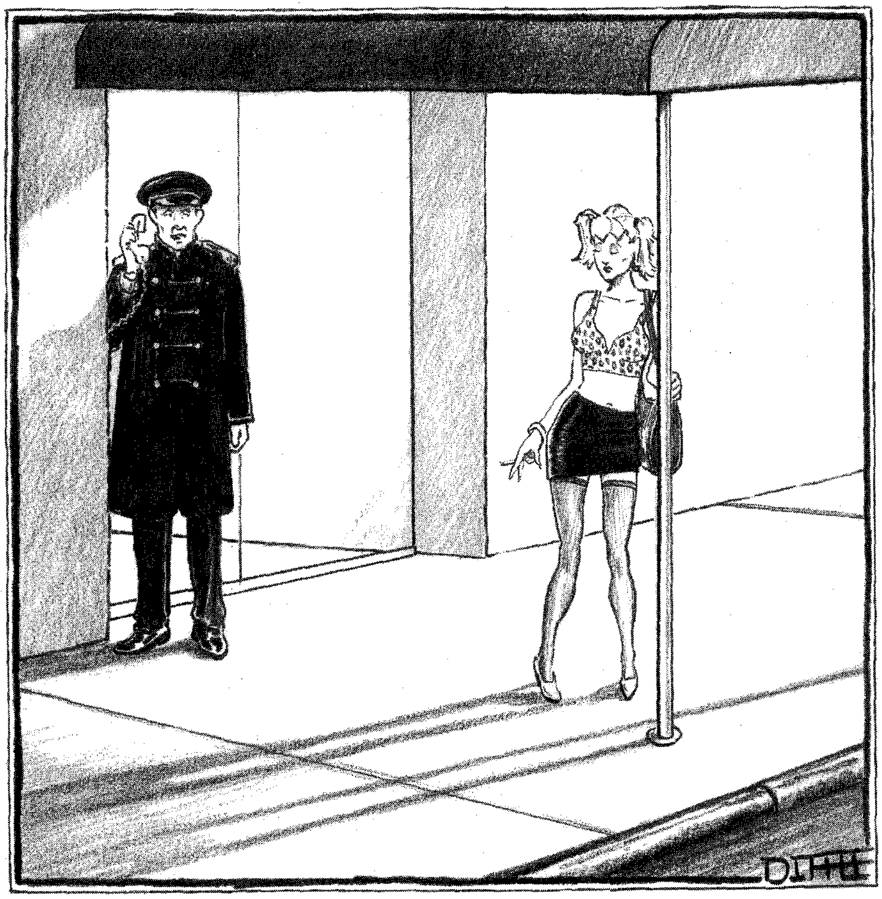
come, like Jane Austen gentry, surrounded by loyal servants and faithful gardeners. ("I have always felt it to be a curious fact," his son Francis wrote later, that "the chief of the moderns, should have written and worked in so essentially a non-modern spirit and manner.") He was an extremely English Englishman, with an Englishman's desire never to sound like a know-it-all coupled with the Englishman's conviction that he alone knows it all.

So Darwin, though filled with bright ideas and keen arguments on almost every imaginable subject, was reluctant to be placed in the position of a Wise Man or Oracle, even as he became one. He felt helpless faced with the kind of universal questions great men get asked: What should we make of the future? Will the United States be the major power? A group of a hundred and fifty German naturalists once sent him, as a weird, touching keepsake, an album of signed photographs of themselves—one imagines them bespectacled and scowling and impressive. It was the kind of thing that wore Darwin out. "We have been rather overdone with Germans this week," his wife sighed on another such occasion. When he wrote an autobiography, meant as a gift for his children, it was candid and affectionate but distant and a little formal. He shrank from confrontation and violent statement while remaining stubborn, opinionated, and convinced beyond reason that his view of life was the one that a man of common sense should hold. Clean-shaven in his youth, he grew a proper set of whiskers as he began to go public, and, photographed by Julia Cameron, he was every bearded inch the sage.

Like most Englishmen of his class and time, Darwin was a prisoner of respectabilities and of encircling embarrassments. Safe within his own garden, though, he was far from diffident or unsure. The tone of his notebooks, as of his private letters, was ironic, impatient, quick-tempered, and he rushed to confident speculations on the basis of small evidence. Few documents are more fun to read than his notebooks of the eighteen-thirties, where his ideas about evolution are already alive, and you see his mind at work, unafraid. Plato, he writes, says in Phaedo "that our '*necessary ideas*' arise from the preexistence of the soul, are not derivable from experience.—read monkeys for preexistence." *Read monkeys for preexistence.* Metaphysics is instantly collapsed into biology. In public, he struggled for another manner, decorous, careful, and unhurried, in which the myth of pure induction—observation uncontaminated by ideas—is kept in place. This makes the somewhat overpraised "Voyage of the Beagle" the most conventionally "naturalistic" of his major books.



"And will he know what this is regarding?"

It was only in the late fifties, when he finally sat down to write "On the Origin of Species," that he found a way forward. He realized that he had to write a completely new kind of story, in a tone that made it seem arrived at; he had to present dynamite as brick, and build a house, only to explode the old foundations. Long-felt speculation had to be presented as close-watched observation, and a general idea about life had to be presented as a sequence of ideas about dogs.

At the start of "The Origin," after Darwin announces that he will study and treat the Great Problem of species—"that mystery of mysteries, as it has been called by one of our greatest philosophers"—there is a sudden deceleration of intensity. He devotes the first chapter to an exhaustive examination of the techniques of dog breeders and pigeon fanciers. A feeling of disorientation is followed by a rising sense of delight. We feel a bit as we do at the beginning of "Henry IV," when we are told that the young prince has surrounded himself with dangerous companions—only to meet a fat old knight and his pathetic hangers-on.

Turning the pages, we realize that Darwin, the greatest Victorian sage, does not write like a Victorian sage. He writes like a Victorian novelist. Absent from his work is the pseudo-Biblical rhetoric, the misty imprecations favored by geniuses of a more or less reactionary temper, like Ruskin and Carlyle, or the parliamentary ponderousness of the writers of a more or less progressive sensibility, like Macaulay and Arnold. Darwin's prose is calm and exact and, in its way, witty—not aphoristic, but ready to seize on a small point to make a large one, closer to George Eliot and Anthony Trollope than to his contemporary defenders, like T. H. Huxley and John Tyndall. But then Darwin had a novelist's problem when he sat down to write: how to reconcile the endless variation of the natural world with a set of organizing patterns. ("Variation Under Domestication," the title of the first chapter of "The Origin of Species," could be the title of the collected works of Eliot, as, for that matter, "Selection in Relation to Sex" could be that of Trollope's.)

The point that Darwin wishes to make through the agency of his setters and birds, though not directly demonstrative of his thesis, is brilliantly illustrative of it. If a wolf—within a time frame so short that it can be almost entirely recorded, and by means so simple that they can be mastered even by illiterate people—could be transformed through selective breeding into everything from a Great Dane to a toy Pekinese, then surely Nature, working on a time scale so much greater, could produce even more dramatic transformations—say, monkey into man. Similarly, if one kind of pigeon can become all kinds of pigeon—some to deliver mail and others just to pout and look pretty—then one kind of animal could surely become many others as it descended through time and the pressures of specialized niches.

Instead of entering the argument by the front door of the temple, where people debate the origin of Earth and the destiny of man, Darwin, with an artless shrug, enters through the back door of a barn: Do we really know what happens when animals change? Well, yes, he says, and here's what we know, very exactly. Nor is this a mere gesture, occupying a page or two ("One need only look at the rich achievements of the domestic breeder to see . . .") and pointing in a general way toward an acknowledged truth. Darwin offers instead a complex and exhaustive demonstration of how animal domestication and breeding work, by someone who has been in the shed with the birds and the eggs. We learn countless details about how pigeon fanciers change pigeons, and about how cattle vary in pasture. His immersion in the field enables him not only to make his primary point at length but also to make a critical secondary point: that even when domestic breeders aren't trying to vary their cattle, the cattle vary anyway, through isolation and inbreeding. Change happens when you want it to happen, and when you don't.

What's more, the proud domestic pigeon breeders, ignorant of biology, insist that each of their many breeds must derive from a unique species, even though biologists know that the many kinds of domestic pigeon arise from one common species, our old familiar Central Park friend. Darwin gently uses the biologist against the breeder, the breeder against the biologist. The climactic passage of "The Origin" 's opening chapter is at once innocently wide-eyed and scalpel-sharp conclusive, using the amused first person to make the central, impersonal point:

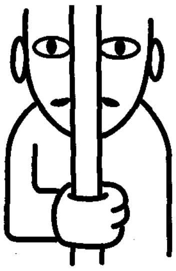
> I have discussed the probable origin of domestic pigeons at some, yet quite insufficient, length; because when I first kept pigeons and watched the several kinds . . . I felt fully as much difficulty in believing that they could ever have descended from a common parent, as any naturalist could in coming to a similar conclusion in regard to the many species of finches, or other large groups of birds, in nature. One circumstance has struck me much; namely that all the breeders of the various domestic animals and the cultivators of plants, with whom I have ever conversed, or whose treatises I have read, are firmly convinced that the several breeds to which each has attended, are descended from so many aboriginally distinct species. Ask, as I have asked, a celebrated raiser of Hereford cattle, whether his cattle might not have descended from long horns and he will laugh you to scorn. I have never met a pigeon, or poultry, or duck, or rabbit fancier, who was not fully convinced that each main breed was descended from a distinct species. Van Mons, in his treatise on pears and apples, shows how utterly he disbelieves that the several sorts, for instance a Ribston-pippin or Codlin-apple, could ever have proceeded from the seeds of the same tree. . . . May not those naturalists who, knowing far less of the laws of inheritance than does the breeder, and knowing no more than he does of the intermediate links in the long lines of descent, yet admit that many of our domestic races have descended from the same parents—may they not learn a lesson of caution, when they deride the idea of species in a state of nature being lineal descendant of other species?

A revolution in human consciousness is made from the self-deluding vanities of rabbit fanciers and poor Van Mons's obvious mistake about Ribston-pippins. The argument is airtight, inescapable, and cunningly faux-naïf. Darwin uses empirical instances not inductively, to build proof, but infectiously, to weaken resistance.

Darwin's gambit of beginning with dogs and pigeons was almost too successful; one of the readers employed by his publisher, John Murray, recommended in his report on "The Origin" that the book would sell much better if it were all pigeons, without the weird speculative stuff that came afterward. Yet Darwin made the literary decision along with the practical decision—he knew that he was going to write his book, and he embarked on his program of pigeon fancying in order to help himself get started. The decision was both ethical and rhetorical: Darwin looked for evidence in the homely, the overlooked, the undervalued, and the artisanal. This enterprise of learning from the low—of making the mere naturalist and fancier into a peer of the scientist—was an effort to shift the sources of knowledge and models of thought.

In a revelatory book published this year, "Pilgrim on the Great Bird Continent: The Importance of Everything and Other Lessons from Darwin's Lost Notebooks," Lyanda Lynn Haupt has a mind-changing chapter on Darwin's relation to the "pigeon fancy," the largely working-class London and Birmingham pigeon-breeding enthusiasts with whom he studied, and from whom he learned much of what we read in the first part of "The Origin." Haupt, a bird lover herself—good Darwinian writing continues to come from the edges as much as from the center of the field—points out how obsessive and complicated Darwin's relation to bird breeders was. "He traversed, with glee, a boundary clearly marked in both the social and scientific sands," she writes. He attended pigeon shows, sought out the prize-winning specialists, and then had his children help him as he bred his own flocks. "I am hand & glove with all sorts of Fanciers, Spital-field weavers & all sorts of odd specimens of the Human species, who fancy Pigeons," he wrote to a friend. He formed a close working alliance with a self-educated pigeon fancier named William Tegetmeier, the poultry editor for the naturalist journal *Field*, to the point that Tegetmeier claimed a partnership with him. (Darwin gently demurred.) This enthusiasm for the overlooked was not peculiar to pigeons. As Gerald Weissmann has argued, in his remarkable essay "Darwin's Audubon," Darwin, against the grain of his time, chose to take Audubon, the American rogue artist and amateur bird collector, seriously, and not just as a source of information but as a model of truth seeking. He set out to widen the scope of what counted and who was allowed to count in science while seeming only to count heads and pigeons.

Admiring a scientist's prose, we usually try to humanize it by mapping the pattern of metaphor within it: look, Einstein was a visionary just like Keats. But the remarkable thing about Darwin as a writer is not how skillfully he uses metaphor but how artfully he avoids it. He argues by example, not by analogy; the point of the opening of "The Origin" isn't that something similar happens with domesticated breeds and natural species; the point is that the very same thing happens, albeit unplanned and over a much longer period. The notebooks and letters and earlier drafts show that analogies—not least the very idea of "selection," nature conceived as breeder—were powerful tools for him, as for anyone else; but it was part of his shrewdness to use them parsimoniously in his exposition.



Reading "Selection in Relation to Sex," for instance, your urge to draw analogies between his study of the way that birds' plumage and song affect their reproductive success and the way men dress up and show off in order to attract women is so overwhelming that you practically have to bite your tongue to avoid it. Darwin bit his. (Generations have not so bitten, with predictable results.) Page after page goes by, in which the analogies to courtship, love, and flirtation are soberly avoided; when a French naturalist is quoted who uses just such larksome language, Darwin dutifully keeps it in the original French, as Gibbon kept the sexual escapades of the looser Romans in the original Latin.

But this turns out to be buildup, not letdown. After fourteen chapters of copious detail on the preening of the bronze-winged pigeon of Australia (which "whilst standing before the female, lowers his head almost to the ground, spreads out and raises perpendicularly his tail, and half expands his wings") and the song of the European male bustard (which utters during breeding season "a peculiar sound resembling 'ock' "), the argument once again gets paid out:

> What then are we to conclude from these facts and considerations? Does the male parade his charms with so much pomp and rivalry for no purpose? Are we not justified in believing that the female exerts a choice, and that she receives the addresses of the male who pleases her most? It is not probable that she consciously deliberates; but she is most excited or attracted by the most beautiful, or melodious, or gallant males. Nor need it be supposed that the female studies each stripe or spot of colour; that the peahen for instance, admires each detail in the gorgeous train of the peacock. . . . Nevertheless after hearing how carefully the male Argus pheasant displays his elegant primary wing feathers and erects his ocellated plumes in the right position for their full effect; or again how the male goldfinch alternately displays his gold-bespangled wings, we ought not to feel too sure that the female does not attend to each detail of beauty. We can judge, as already remarked, of choice being exerted, only from the analogy of our own minds, and the mental powers of birds, if reason be excluded, do not fundamentally differ from ours.

Having studiously avoided comparisons for hundreds of pages packed with ornithological detail, the entire book springs to, so to speak, wild life. Beauty and melody and gallantry, elegance and display, female choice—all are asserted to be as much a part of nature as egg laying. And so, at last, is a firm insistence: we are on a mental continuum with pheasants and peacocks. Analogy is avoided, and then the most unsettling analogy of all is grandly asserted, and without apology. They're us; we're them. This is Darwin's method: an apparently modest allegiance to mere fact gathering abruptly crystallizes into a whole world view.

To call this novelistic is not to assert a cosmetic likeness; it is to see how closely bound storytelling and truth-seeking can be. Both Trollope and Darwin work in the mock-epic mode: the acts of very small and humble and comic creatures, archdeacons and earthworms, are shown to be not just illustrative of heroic and cosmic workings but an aspect of them. Trollope's Barchester is a smallish place, but its acts are not diminutive; every kind of passion and betrayal and tragedy can be found within those narrow provincial precincts. Dr. Grantly is a Greek hero and Mrs. Proudie as big as Clytemnestra if we pay them the right kind of attention. England's pastures are small, and its kennels cozy, but for Darwin they contain the keys to all creation. The delight that we take in the work of both is the delight we take in being shown the vastness of the cosmos in a teabag. (Darwin's own motto of cautious empiricism, "It's dogged as does it," was drawn from a character in "The Last Chronicle of Barset.") Yet the empirical overcharge never becomes a mere data dump. Darwin had the gift—the gift of any good novelist—of making the story sound as though it just got pushed out by the descriptions. The plot seems to grow out of his observations rather than being imposed by his will; in reality, the plot came first, as it usually does.

Gillian Beer, in her influential 1983 study "Darwin's Plots," identified basic ideas about variation, purpose, and development that Darwin learned from his philosophical predecessors and shared with the novelists of his day. No one who has read Beer's book can ever read "Middlemarch" again without seeing it as a kind of mirror of, or practical application of, "The Origin." (Darwin and George Eliot were friends, and once, out of curiosity, attended a séance together.) Darwin's writing, as much as Eliot's, takes speculative argument and makes it look like empirical record-keeping. But the man in the notebooks, with his breezy provocations, keeps peeking out even from the work of the whiskered eminence. Darwin's ability to look pious while demolishing every piety can be seen at its best in what may be the single most explosive sentence in English, which appears in the last chapter of "The Descent of Man": "We thus learn that man is descended from a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in its habits, and an inhabitant of the Old World."

We can be startled by its boldness today; we know what its effect was in 1871. Yet how beautifully it is situated within the book, after hundreds of detailed pages on sexual selection, on peacocks' tails and mammals' tusks, by which point it is presented not as a thesis to be demonstrated (although that was exactly what it was) but as a conclusion forced inexorably on the unwilling author. And then the sly use of words—the "hairy" quadruped (unnecessary for the point but necessary to make the image maximally disturbing) and the dynamite of that tail and those pointed ears, with their specific invocation of the diabolical, and the use of the domestic verb "furnished." There are a thousand ways the sentence could have been written in order to minimize its damage to belief; for example, "Those primates closest in organization and structure to man may have had their early origins among arboreal quadrupeds native to the old world." But, a decade after "The Origin," he writes, instead, the mortar sentence, the one that makes the minimal noise incoming and does the maximum damage on arrival. *There's* your grandfather: in a tree on all fours, his ears sticking straight up and his tail swinging through the branches.

"It's ten to five. Please raise your seatback to its full upright and locked position."

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Everywhere in Darwin's work, the radicalism of his points is half-concealed by the calming expansiveness of his syntax. He is gentle but unyielding on the religious question. "I am aware that the assumed instinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for His existence," he writes toward the end of "The Descent." "But this is a rash argument. . . . The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator of the universe does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long-continued culture." In short, belief in the divine is man-made, not God-given. As Haupt points out, Darwin called his book "The Descent of Man," not the "Ascent," denying his readers the solace of an upward arc. Believers search for a crumb of comfort or teleology in Darwin, but what looks promising always turns out to be poisoned. At the end of "The Origin," for instance, Darwin feints toward reassurance, suggesting that life will "tend to progress" over time. But his insistent, immediately adjacent point is that the future in which that progress may happen will be like the past—a vast stretch of geologic time, unstructured by plan or purpose. "We may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length," he writes, and though the words "confidence" and "secure" provide cushioning, the plain sense is that there is no God or plan to interrupt a coming span of time beyond our control or even our imagining. It is the blank prospect that Larkin saw from his high windows: more grains of sand, and more shaking.

Darwin's strategy was one of the greatest successes in the history of rhetoric, so much so that we are scarcely now aware that it was a strategy. His pose of open-mindedness and ostentatiously asserted country virtue made him, in his way, as unassailable as George Washington. The notion persists to this day that Darwin was a circumspect observer of animals, not a confident theorist of life. As early as Charles Kingsley's 1863 children's story "The Water Babies," "Mr. Darwin" appears as a humble and unworldly figure, head in the clouds, pockets filled with fish and fossils—the sort who couldn't harm a fly, or a fair-minded theologian.

Darwin was humble and modest in exactly the way that Inspector Columbo is. He knows from the beginning who the guilty party is, and what the truth is, and would rather let the bad guys hang themselves out of arrogance and overconfidence, while he walks around in his raincoat, scratching his head and saying, "Oh, yeah—just one more thing about that six-thousand-year-old Earth, Reverend Snodgrass . . ." Darwin was a civil and courteous man, but he was also what is now polemically called a Darwinian fundamentalist. He knew that he was right, and that his being right meant that much else people wanted to believe was wrong. Design was just chance plus time, greed not a sin from the Devil but an inheritance from monkeys. "Our descent then, is the origin of our evil passions!!" he wrote in his notebooks. "The Devil under form of Baboon is our grandfather!"

Yet the rhetoric explains one of the

most easily missed things about Darwin's revolution. Given that his was the most profound and successful challenge to dogmatic religious belief that had ever been launched—in a single generation, it caused intelligent people to accept claims about history and man's place in it that had been heretical for thousands of years—its reception was remarkably peaceable. Of course, it inspired enormous controversy, but that controversy was far less battering than he had imagined it would be. Galileo and Einstein suffered far more for their more abstract ideas than Darwin did for his. Victoria read him, Disraeli mocked him, debates were held, and Darwin, the man who told Europeans that their forebears were monkeys with pointed ears in trees, was proposed for a knighthood and buried in Westminster Abbey, as grand a figure as Tennyson or Browning.

You don't achieve a triumph of this kind without knowing what you're doing, and Darwin was a cagey man when it came to carrying his day. He was pleased to let other men, particularly his great friend and champion T. H. Huxley, do the dirty work of polemics. Throughout thirty years of friendship, he and Huxley played, knowingly, a kind of good-cop, bad-cop game in public. Their correspondence shows that each knew his given role—when Darwin at last was put forward for an honorary degree at Oxford by the reactionary Lord Salisbury, it was with the severe corollary that Huxley could *not* get the same. Huxley and Darwin, sharing the same basic views, enjoyed the joke. When Huxley had his famous debate with Bishop Wilberforce, Darwin kept silent, safe in the country, but wrote to his defender, "How durst you attack a live Bishop in that fashion? I am quite ashamed of you! Have you no reverence for fine lawn sleeves?" And then, "By Jove, you seem to have done it well!"

The discrepancy between the public and the private Darwin, the ingenuous naturalist and the canny back-room politician, can make him sound like a bit of a phony, or at least like a shrewder operator than we want our saints to be: Janet Browne shows how carefully the Darwin-Huxley alliance took over the key positions in the London scientific societies of the day. Yet we have also learned how much a sense of personal loss lay behind "The Origin." The tragedy of Darwin's life, the death of his daughter Annie, in 1851, had overwhelmed him and his wife in the years before the book was written, and lent a particular delicacy to his implicit attack on religion. Darwin and his wife had ten children, and, in the remote and awkward but heartfelt way of his class, he loved them all; but he had a special feeling for Annie. In "Darwin, His Daughter, and Human Evolution," published in 2002, Randal Keynes, a Darwin descendant who had access to previously private family papers, makes the case, quietly and convincingly, that the view of existence that underlies "The Origin," with its sober stoicism about the role of death and destruction in making new life, was shadowed by Darwin's experience of his child's death.

Annie fell sick in 1850, with what seems to have been a form of tuberculosis, and her frantic parents spent months trying all the futile therapies that people had in the nineteenth century, not unlike the delaying actions of many contemporary cancer treatments. In the end, nothing helped, and Annie died at the age of ten, after a long vigil. Heartbroken, Darwin wrote a ten-page memorial and locked it in his desk. It is written in his best naturalist's manner: "She danced well, and was extremely fond of it. She liked reading, but evinced no particular line of taste. She had one singular habit, which, I presume, would ultimately have turned into some pursuit; namely a strong pleasure in looking out words or names in dictionaries." But the inventory was not unemotional. "She must have known how we loved her," he concludes. "Oh that she could now know how deeply, how tenderly we do still."

After Annie's death, Darwin abandoned the remaining vestiges of Christian faith, the last preference for even Unitarian theology, and became, essentially, a stoic. He believed that the contemplation of the immensity of time, and the repertory of feelings, was all that was left to us. There was no inherent meaning in Annie's dying at ten, except the recognition that mortality was the rule of existence; serenity could be found only in the contemplation of the vast indifference of the universe.

As Darwin worked on "The Origin" in the ensuing years, Keynes shows, he was haunted by Annie's death. In earlier musings, he had written of "the dreadful but quiet war of organic beings going on in the peaceful woods." But after Annie's death these words seem to have been inadequate. Now he

"Watching people argue about the world situation night after night makes me feel like I'm doing something about it."

wrote, "Nothing is easier than to admit in words the truth of the universal struggle for life, or more difficult—at least I have found it so—than constantly to bear this conclusion in mind. . . . We behold the face of nature bright with gladness. . . . We do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects and seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life." It is this view of life that illuminates the famous passage at the end of "The Origin" where Darwin writes of the "entangled bank" of existence, "clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth," all produced through the blind agency of natural selection. "Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows," he went on. "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

Darwin was not especially preoccupied by the problems that move some Darwinians today: he readily saw through the puzzle of ostensibly intelligent design. (An eye that works well evolved from eyes that worked less well.) And, because he didn't know about genes, the great hole at the center of his argument—how did inheritance happen—was one that he never solved. But he was obsessed with the problem of time: How old was Earth? Had there been enough time for evolution to happen? As men dug up the bones that showed just how ancient life really was, what lessons could you learn? How could you imagine time in a way that seemed to make sense of our own lives and emotions?

In Darwin's work, time moves at two speeds: there is the vast abyss of time in which generations change and animals mutate and evolve; and then there is the gnat's-breath, hummingbird-heart time of creaturely existence, where our children are born and grow and, sometimes, die before us. He wrote one of the founding documents of developmental psychology, a series of detailed notes on his son's first twelve months. The space between the tiny but heartfelt time of human life and the limitless time of Nature became Darwin's implicit subject. Religion had always reconciled quick time and deep time by pretending that the one was in some way a prelude to the other—a prelude or a prologue or a trial or a treatment. Artists of the Romantic period, in an increasingly secularized age, thought that through some vague kind of transcendence they could bridge the gap. They couldn't. Nothing could. The tragedy of life is not that there is no God but that the generations through which it progresses are too tiny to count very much. There isn't a special providence in the fall of a sparrow, but try telling that to the sparrows. The human challenge that Darwin felt, and that his work still presents, is to see both times truly—not to attempt to humanize deep time, or to dismiss quick time, but to make enough of both without overlooking either.

A new book, "Darwin Loves You: Natural Selection and the Re-Enchantment of the World," by George Levine, a professor emeritus of English at Rutgers University, tries to vindicate Darwin for students of literature by emphasizing his modest "sense of wonder," the almost mystical awe at the sheer existence of life in the universe; Darwin disenchanted believers in Heaven, but he reënchanted lovers of Earth. Levine's book is one of the most appealing and subtle attempts to bridge biology and the humanities. It proposes an "enchanted secularity"; because Darwin robs mankind of place and purpose, he gave us a chance to love and revere nature "precisely in its refusal to be like us."

Levine is always on the side of the angels. But sometimes he is on the side of the angels when he ought to be on the side of the apes. If Darwin offers us a disenchanted universe—a universe drained of magic and of meaning—what would it be like to live in an enchanted one? Religious faith, after all, often sees itself as bedevilled and beleaguered even when it reigns more or less unchallenged. Conversely, the soulless materialism of the Darwinian universe can be a comfort: one wishes that a Darwinian could have been by Dr. Johnson's deathbed as he sank into desperate fear of eternal damnation for having lusted after actresses in his youth. He would have found solace in the idea that there was nothing out there save oblivion, and that the world would remember the things that he had said on Earth.

Although we can deduce from Darwin a new doctrine of "enchanted secularism"—or, indeed, Edward O. Wilson's proposal of a "scientific humanism"—we don't need to add to him to love what he says about life. For Darwinism has never been a threat to humanism; it is humanism, in flight. By humanism, we can mean two things. One is that man is the measure of all things; the other, that all things can be measured by man. The first view, essentially religious in origin, inspires Renaissance painting and the Sistine ceiling and Vitruvian proportions. The second view—that what makes people uniquely interesting is their capacity for gauging their environment and changing it; that the more we measure, the more accurately we see what things are actually like—has been what we have meant by humanism since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, and Darwin is one of its greatest exponents and examples.

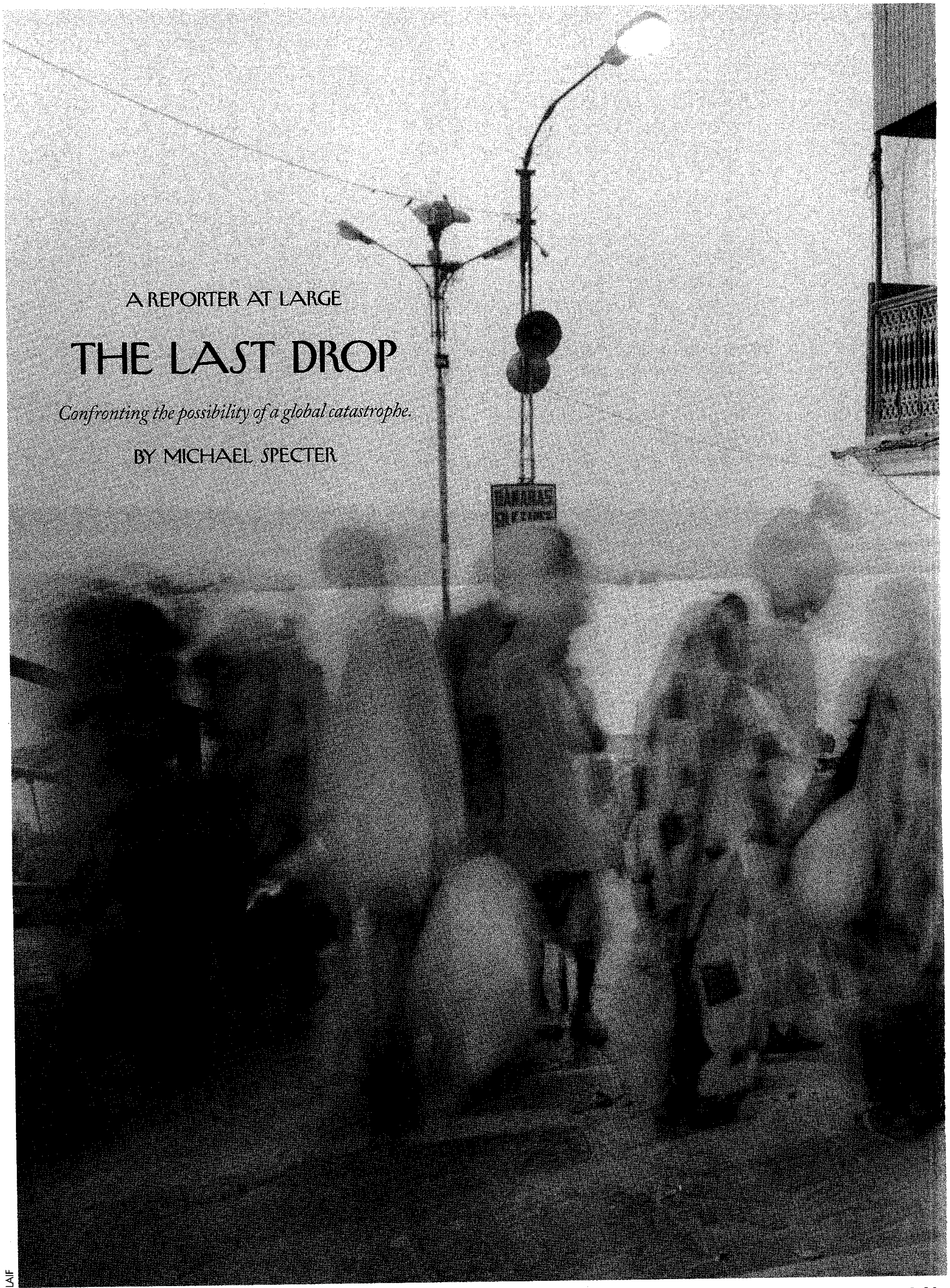
Reading Darwin as a natural novelist shows us a Darwin as complex as good writers should be. He ended as a skeptical materialist who had proved that the forms of life were shaped by history, not by a supervising mind. But reading him also shows us that no emotion we would fear losing is lost in the transformation. The hardest Darwinian view of all is still roomy enough for ordinary love to breathe in. Darwin was a Darwinian fundamentalist. But he was not a Darwinian absolutist. He knew that what feels to us like soul or spirit—the flash of understanding at an infant's smile or grief at a child's death—can never be argued away. He thought that he had found the secret of life. But he knew that nothing could solve the problems of living. That takes all the time we have. ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE LAST DROP

Confronting the possibility of a global catastrophe.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER



LAIF

A stall in India. Nearly half the people in the world don't have the kind of clean water and sanitation services that were available

sand years ago to the citizens of ancient Rome. Photograph by Peter Bialobrzeski.

Most mornings, the line begins to form at dawn: scores of silent women with babies strapped to their backs, buckets balanced on their heads, and in each hand a bright-blue plastic jug. On good days, they will wait less than an hour before a water tanker rumbles across the rutted dirt path that passes for a road in Kesum Purbahari, a slum on the southern edge of New Delhi. On bad days, when there is no electricity for the pumps, the tankers don't come at all. "That water kills people," a young mother named Shoba said one recent Saturday morning, pointing to a row of battered pails filled with thick, caramel-colored liquid. "Whoever drinks it will die." The water was from a community standpipe shared by thousands of the slum's residents. Women often use it to launder clothes and bathe their children, but nobody is desperate enough to drink it. Instead, they take their buckets to a tanker stop, sit in the searing heat, and wait. Shoba found a spot in the shade next to a family of sleeping hogs. She wore a peach-colored sari and, to ward off the sun, a thin purple scarf around her head. Two little girls played happily in piles of refuse that lined the road.

There is no standard for how much water a person needs each day, but experts usually put the minimum at fifty litres. The government of India promises (but rarely provides) forty. Most people drink two or three litres—less than it takes to flush a toilet. The rest is typically used for cooking, bathing, and sanitation. Americans consume between four hundred and six hundred litres of water each day, more than any other people on earth. Most Europeans use less than half that. The women of Kesum Purbahari each hoped to haul away a hundred litres that day—two or three buckets' worth. Shoba has a husband and five children, and that much water doesn't go far in a family of seven, particularly when the temperature reaches a hundred and ten degrees before noon. She often makes up the difference with cups from the city's ubiquitous and unhygienic kiosks, or with bottled water, which costs more than water delivered any other way. Sometimes she just buys milk; it's cheaper. Like the poorest people everywhere, the residents of New Delhi's slums spend a far greater percentage of their incomes on water than anyone lucky enough to live in a house connected to a municipal system of pipes.

Water is often seen as the most basic and accessible element of life, and seemingly the most plentiful. For every gallon in rivers or lakes, fifty more lie buried in vast aquifers beneath the surface of the earth. Yet at least since the cities of ancient Sumeria went to war over control of their rivers—long before tales of Moses parting the Red Sea or the Flood described in the Bible—water has been a principal source of conflict. (The word "rivals" even has it roots in fights over water, coming from the Latin *rivalis*, for "one taking from the same stream as another.") By 2050, there will be at least nine billion people on the planet, the great majority of them in developing countries. If water were spread evenly across the globe, there might be enough for everyone. But rain often falls in the least desirable places at the most disadvantageous times. Delhi gets fewer than forty days of rain each year—all in less than four months. In other Indian cities, the situation is worse. Somehow, though, the country has to sustain nearly twenty per cent of the earth's population with four per cent of its water. China has less water than Canada—and forty times as many people. With wells draining aquifers far faster than they can be replenished by rain, the water table beneath Beijing has fallen nearly two hundred feet in the past twenty years.

Most of the world's great civilizations grew up around rivers, and few forces have so clearly shaped the destiny of human populations. When full and flowing, rivers have brought prosperity to the cities and nations they feed. Harnessing the power of a major river has been a signature of progress at least since Rome built its first aqueduct, the Aqua Appia, more than two thousand years ago. New York, London, and Rome would have disappeared long ago without the Hudson, the Thames, and the Tiber. In the twenty-first century, though, no river can satisfy the demands of the world's biggest cities. The fourteen million residents of New Delhi consume nine hundred million gallons of freshwater each day; the city supplies nearly seven hundred million gallons from rivers and reservoirs, but more than a third of it is lost to leaks within the ten-thousand-kilometre system of dilapidated pipes and pumping stations. Some of the rest is siphoned off by an increasingly brazen water mafia, which then sells it to people in slums like Kesum Purbahari who are supposed to get it for free.

"I cleared out the case so people can crawl inside and feel what it's like to be a piece of meat."

When you can't get enough water from the surface of the earth, there are really only two alternatives: pray for rain or start to dig. In India, Africa, China, and much of the rest of the developing world, people are digging as they never have before. Nearly two billion people rely on wells for their water, some of which is easily accessible. Far more lies trapped in the pores of rocks, or buried hundreds of metres below tons of ancient shale and metamorphic debris. Sturdy drills and cheap new pumps have made much of that water available—liberating millions of farmers from centuries of dependence on rain. The freedom comes at a cost, though, because once groundwater is gone it is often gone for good.

There were two million wells in India thirty years ago; today, there are twenty-three million. As the population grows, the freshwater available to each resident dwindles, and people have no choice but to dig deeper. Drill too deep, though, and saltwater and arsenic can begin to seep in. When that happens, an aquifer is ruined forever. Wells throughout the country have become useless. Brackish water has even infiltrated parts of Punjab, the northern state that is India's most important agricultural region. As sources dry up and wells are abandoned, farmers have turned on each other and on themselves. Indian newspapers are filled with accounts of fights between states or neighbors over access to lakes and reservoirs, and of "suicide farmers," driven to despair by poverty, debt, and often by drought. There have been thousands of such suicides in the past few years.

Even in the most prosperous neighborhoods of cities like Delhi and Mumbai, water is available for just a few hours each day—and often only as a brown and sludgy trickle—forcing millions of middle-class Indians to stumble out of bed at three or four in the morning to turn on their taps. Then, with the help of electric pumps, they push the water to storage tanks on their rooftops. Battles over the water supply have become so common that Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, the Minister of Water Resources, sometimes describes himself as the Minister of Water Conflicts.

The fight for water intensifies every day: between rich residents of overcrowded cities and their poorest neighbors, and between cities and the rural territory that surrounds them. Forty million Indians live in slums—there are more than a thousand in Delhi alone—and almost all are caught in the peculiar logic of Indian bureaucracy: because slums are not considered official settlements, they are not entitled to pipes that would connect them to the municipal water system. In the end, people can do nothing but wait.

Around noon, when a tanker finally arrived in Kesum Purbahari, sounds of shrieking women temporarily drowned out the noise of the jets taking off from the nearby runways of Indira Gandhi International Airport. Neighbors who had sat patiently for hours, swapping stories and sharing cigarettes, erupted in a collective wail. They began pushing each other, trying to grab a ratty green garden hose attached to the tanker's spout and cram it into their buckets. With every jarring tug on the hose, precious drops spilled in rivulets and then torrents, turning the burning summer dirt to mud.

"We speak of our information technology and the advances we have made in our society with justifiable pride," Mahesh Chaturvedi told me one afternoon when I visited him in his quiet New Delhi neighborhood filled with pipal trees and spotted sparrows. Chaturvedi, a hydrologist, has taught at Harvard and for many years was a professor of environmental sciences and engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology. Most mornings, he, too, rises at four to turn on his tap. "We take seriously the discussion of Indians going to the moon," he said. "We have very big dreams. Yet here we are, a deeply backward country peering at modernity from the threshold. It is a fact of the human condition that we can achieve none of our goals without water. Nobody could. People often speak as if that were not a serious problem, or that this is one of those things we have to accept because, after all, this is India. But if we accept it we can't possibly survive. Not this way. One day—and it won't be long—we are going to wake up and it is just going to be too late."

Not even the miraculous scientific achievements of the twentieth century have affected human health and development as profoundly as has the ready availability of clean water. In modern countries, diseases that were responsible for tens of millions of deaths throughout history—cholera, typhoid, malaria—have essentially vanished. Their disappearance is due at least as much to the use of sewers as to any medical advance. Clean water has not only healed humanity but nourished it. Irrigation for agriculture accounts for more than two-thirds of all water use, and sophisticated water-distribution projects have helped increase crop yields to feed the earth's surging population.

Despite those accomplishments, nearly half the people in the world don't have the kind of clean water and sanitation services that were available two thousand years ago to the citizens of ancient Rome. More than a billion people lack access to drinking water, and at least that many have never seen a toilet. Half of the hospital beds on earth are occupied by people with an easily preventable waterborne disease. In the past decade, more children have died from diarrhea than people have been killed in all armed conflicts since the Second World War. Simply providing access to clean water could save two million lives each year. As cities have grown, many rivers have turned into fetid sewers. The amount of fecal bacteria in the Yamuna River, the principal source of water for New Delhi, has increased thousands of times over the past decade. Thirty per cent of the schools in the developing world have no water of any kind. A recent study in Bangladesh found that the addition of a single private toilet could increase the number of girls attending school by as much as fifteen per cent. In 2000, the United Nations established eight Millennium Development Goals aimed at eliminating the world's most desperate poverty. One seeks to cut by half over the next decade the proportion of people without access to clean drinking water. Another sets a similar target for improving access to sanitation facilities. The U.N., which has designated this the decade of "Water for Life," estimates that, if both goals are met, "only" thirty to seventy million people will die in the next fifteen years from preventable water-related diseases. It is already clear that there is little chance of meeting either goal.

"Is there a more egregious example of the failure of governments and leaders than our inability to meet basic human standards for clean water and sanitation?" Peter Gleick, the president of the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment and Security, asked me recently when I visited him at his office in Oakland, California. Gleick, who is forty-nine, has studied the connections between water, development, and human health for nearly three decades. He argues that management failures and political myopia are at least as responsible for water problems as shortages and population growth. "Providing enough water to grow food for the planet is and will continue to be a challenge," he said. "So is limiting the damage pollution has caused. Still, how can any government that cares for its people let them die of something so simple as a lack of clean water? But they do, in numbers that are staggering. This problem is so fundamental and so widespread, yet it's not like curing AIDS or eradicating malaria. It is not scientifically challenging. It's just a matter of whether or not we care about the most vulnerable people on our planet."

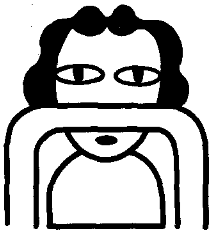
Nearly every country subsidizes the cost of water, but those subsidies rarely achieve the intended goal of improving services for the poor. In India, most people who are connected to the municipal water system pay less than a tenth of what it costs to deliver that water. The poor are supposed to pay nothing, but they rarely have the pipes that would permit them to take advantage of the subsidy.

India's situation is extreme, but other countries have had similar problems. In the nineteenth century, when piped water was first introduced in the United States and in many European cities, municipal utilities rarely installed meters in private homes or small businesses, and, as a result, few customers paid their fair share of costs. Water was seen as a right that automatically deserved subsidies, and it was so plentiful and cheap that restricting its flow, or charging customers for how much they used, seemed to make little sense. New York City began to require water meters less than twenty years ago.

Because the global supply of freshwater is widely regarded as a collective resource, most people feel entitled to claim a share. No politician in India (or in almost any other country) can win votes by suggesting an increase in prices. So water remains free for many people and is sold at absurdly low cost to the rest. The same is true for the energy required to pump that water from the ground. Without sufficient revenues, utilities cannot maintain or replace their antiquated systems—or deliver water to the people who need it most.

"This is a problem everywhere in the world," Peter P. Rogers, a professor of environmental engineering at Harvard, told me. "People will not pay for water. They consider it immoral. You can live without food for forty days and water for five at the most. Nobody is ever going to consciously die of thirst. And what is the most obvious result? The poor will suffer. But the poor always do."

Philosophers and economists at least since Copernicus have noted that, although no substance is more valuable than water, none is more likely to be free. In "The Wealth of Nations," Adam Smith called this the "diamond-water paradox": although water is essential for life, and the value of diamonds is mostly aesthetic, the price of water has always been far lower than that of diamonds. Economists often argue that water should be considered a commodity, like housing or food. But water possesses an intangible, even mystical, quality that transcends the principles of economics; people simply don't think about it in the way that they think about transportation or clothing—and they never have. Water is precious, but not like oil, which, once burned, is gone forever. While there is almost no human activity that doesn't depend on water in some way, it never actually disappears: when water leaves one place, it simply goes somewhere else.



Water that dinosaurs drank is still consumed by humans, and the amount of freshwater on earth has not changed significantly for millions of years. But that doesn't mean it's available when or where it is needed. Nearly all of the earth's water is in the ocean. Only three per cent is even theoretically available for humans to drink. Most of that is locked in polar ice caps and glaciers, or deeply embedded in layers of rock. If a large bucket were to represent all the seawater on the planet, and a coffee cup the amount of freshwater frozen in glaciers, only a teaspoon would remain for us to drink.

The earth's population has increased exponentially in the two hundred years since Thomas Malthus predicted that the demand for food would soon exceed the supply. In fact, the rate of growth has been far more punishing than Malthus could have imagined. The human population more than tripled in the twentieth century alone (and water use grew sixfold). Within the next fifty years, demographers expect the population to grow again by as much as fifty per cent. There have always been predictions that such increases would present humanity with insurmountable obstacles, and those predictions have always been wrong. Yet even if the population of the earth stopped rising tomorrow—and no demographer considers that possible—the number of people facing water shortages will continue to grow for decades. There are simply too many people who lack access to clean water; even the slightest improvement in the standard of living for hundreds of millions of them would increase demand immensely.

This puts countries like India in a nearly impossible position, caught between a desire for economic growth and a need for dependable sources of freshwater. Industrialization and the economic success that it brings often have unforeseen implications. Agrarian societies have traditionally consumed little meat. But in China and other East Asian nations where income has been growing rapidly this is no longer true. In India, sixty-five per cent of the population work on farms. Nonetheless, the country now has more than two hundred and eighty million urban residents, and the shift to city life, which began more than a hundred years ago as rural residents fled famine and drought, continues. By 2020, more than a third of the population will have made the move.

As people migrate to cities, they invariably start to eat more meat, adding to the pressure on water resources. The amount of water required to feed cattle and to process beef is enormous: it takes a thousand tons of water to grow a ton of grain and fifteen thousand to grow a ton of cow. Thirteen hundred gallons of water go into the production of a single hamburger; a steak requires double that amount. Every day, a hundred thousand people join India's middle class, and many have become affluent enough to eat out every week. Early one evening in Bangalore, India's particularly vibrant version of Silicon Valley, I wandered into the Kobe Sizzlers, which is on the top floor of the Garunda Mall. I rode the escalator up past a Dior boutique, a collection of Sony flat-screen televisions, and a demonstration area for the new Nokia Internet phones. Each store was packed with families who couldn't seem to buy these products fast enough. At Sizzlers, people stood in line to order garlic pepper steaks and French fries. The vast majority of Indians are Hindus, who don't eat beef (and many of the rest are Muslims, who don't eat pork). McDonald's, Sizzlers, and most of their fast-food competitors have been careful to serve food that does not offend Indian habits. Maharaja Macs, which were first made with lamb and now only with chicken, sell by the millions. As does the vegetarian version, McAloo Tikki. So many people are taking advantage of their new social and economic status that the Indian fast-food industry is growing even more rapidly than its technology businesses.

"We are emulating America, and not always in ways that make sense for Indians," Sunita Narain said when I visited her at the Centre for Science and the Environment in New Delhi. Narain, who in 2005 won the Stockholm Water Prize, a sort of Nobel for people attempting to conserve aquatic resources, is perhaps the best known of the many activists in India who focus on issues relating to water. She believes that, by abandoning native dietary traditions—which incorporated a variety of grains—India has compounded its environmental problems. "We don't want a culture with a single type of food," she said. "That serves no one but the companies that sell it. But that is where we are heading. You can call it McDonald's or McIndia. They are the same. You can eat the same thing in Kashmir as you do in Kerala, and that is seen as an achievement. It doesn't mat-

ILL WIND

Two red birds
high on a wire
one said love
one said fire

Two black birds
deep in a tree
one said you
one said me

But wind came up
and tossed them away
no one hears
what they say

—*Michael Ryan*

ter what environment in which you grow the food." She added that even the crops promoted most heavily by the Indian government—rice and wheat—are two that use the most water. "Almost all rice is consumed by humans, so it's at least better than growing grains just to feed cattle," she said. "But now we are either wasting our water on too much rice or wasting it by growing cattle feed. Neither makes sense. We still have nearly three-quarters of the people in rural settings, but the diversity of our agriculture has been lost completely."

Government leaders concede that India's current agricultural policies encourage farmers to waste water. "It's a disgrace, a complete mess," Montek Singh Ahluwalia told me one day when we met in his large, immaculate office adjacent to the Parliament in New Delhi. Ahluwalia, an urbane and contemplative man, is one of the country's most respected officials. He is the deputy chairman of India's planning commission but has also served as Finance Secretary and for many years worked as a senior economist at the World Bank. "Historically, the perception has been that farmers are the weaker end of society, that they need special support and that water should be as cheap for them as possible," he said. "Obviously, we must make certain that the needy have access to water. But just as obviously, when people are growing rice and only rice, the system isn't working. When farmers have water to waste, other people get nothing." His voice rising sharply, Ahluwalia continued, "Water has value. We are going to have to price the damn thing. Because, if we don't, people will continue to use it wantonly. That much we know. I am afraid that if water costs nothing it is worth nothing."

K. Ganasekemon owns a small farm in the village of Vellavedu, along the main coastal highway to Bangalore. He has no idea how much water gushes into his rice paddies every day, but his two-hectare plot looks more like a pond than a farm. An electric pump, protected by a thatched hut, draws water from a well beneath his land, assuring him of a ceaseless flow for months at a time. Scores of ducks bob along the surface, and, when I visited, several women were tending to the rice shoots that had begun to poke through. Ganasekemon, a small man in a white T-shirt and blue sari, has farmed the same way for twenty years, pouring as much water onto his rice as he can. "Last year, the monsoon was perfect," he told me. "So there is plenty of water in the wells here. We don't even have to go too deep, and the rice gets what it needs."

The city of Chennai, just an hour's drive away, has the opposite problem. Chennai, which until ten years ago was known as Madras, lies on the Bay of Bengal, along the thermal equator, and it is quickly becoming one of the largest cities in Asia. It is also one of the most desperate for water. The city is the capital of India's automobile industry and has nearly six million residents, but no significant river or lake. Nor does it get enough rain. People seem to be in motion at all times—on rickshaws, bikes, motorcycles, and overcrowded buses, or on foot. Just as, during Soviet times, no Muscovite would leave home without a string bag in which to carry any product that might suddenly appear in a shop-window, when the citizens of Chennai venture out they often carry pails. Lacking surface water, Chennai relied for decades on wells. Southern India suffered through several intense droughts in the eighties and nineties, and then again over the past few years. As the aquifers were drained of freshwater, many large wells were infiltrated by the sea, making them useless. The city became dependent on monsoons, which almost never fulfill the needs of a large city. Weeks of heavy rains flood roads and railways, disrupt business, and destroy homes. The constant rainfall is usually more than reservoirs, the soil, and local aquifers can absorb, so much of it runs toward the sea and is lost.

Chennai has tried to be inventive. It was the first city in the country to mandate rainwater harvesting, an ancient practice that passed out of fashion during the British Raj. The idea is simple enough. Since ninety per cent of the city's rain falls in just two months, it is essential to capture and store as much of it as possible. Residents and businesses are encouraged to place funnels on their roofs, which shunt rainwater down pipes and into cisterns that are lined with sand and pebbles, to filter impurities. The system is cheap and efficient, and, when used widely, helps many people survive the dry seasons. But it only works when there is enough rain. "When the monsoon fails, we become desperate, and when we have rains it's fine," Sekar Raghavan, the director of Chennai's Rain Centre, said. "It has always been like that. We have had some really hard times, but I don't think the memory of even the worst disaster lasts very long. We try to harvest our water, but it is a big city and a big job, and not everyone understands how much we could save. We simply need more."

Chennai is the largest city in Tamil

Nadu, one of the country's most important agricultural regions. Common sense and a rural tradition of coöperation would suggest that farmers who live near the city share their water and use it sparingly. The agricultural policies of India's government insure the opposite. Rice is the most popular grain in the world, but it requires far more water than any other crop—typically twice as much as wheat and up to ten times more than lettuce. Yet rice and wheat are the two crops that the Indian government supports through price guarantees, so farmers have little incentive to grow anything else or to use less water. On the same amount of land that Chinese farmers grow four thousand kilograms of rice each year, Indians grow no more than sixteen hundred, and they use ten times more water to do it than is necessary. Near Chennai, rice is all that farmers grow.

I visited Ganasekemon's village with N. Parasuraman, a water specialist who works at the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, which is dedicated to preserving the region's environmental resources. Swaminathan is eighty-one and a national hero. In the nineteen-sixties, the country experienced several nearly catastrophic famines. Swaminathan, a plant geneticist, was the head of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute at the time. By combining seeds developed by Norman Borlaug, an American agriculture expert, with local strains of rice and wheat, he helped launch the Green Revolution. The results astonished the world. Yields improved so dramatically that India, which would not have survived without massive imports of grain from the United States, soon became one of the world's biggest exporters. Swaminathan's sophisticated hybrids benefitted greatly from the targeted use of pesticides and fertilizer. More than that, though, the Green Revolution was driven by an almost limitless use of water.

Before the nineteen-sixties, groundwater played no real role in farming, and wells were rarely used to irrigate crops. When the amount of rainfall decreased by twenty per cent, so did the grain harvest. By the late eighties, however, this, too, had changed. In 1987, a year in which rainfall was thirty per cent below normal, the production of grains fell by only five per cent. The difference was due to groundwater. "We couldn't possibly exist without a good well," Ganasekemon said to me. "I don't know how anyone ever did." Ganasekemon's use of water is excessive but not unusual: whoever owns land also owns the groundwater beneath it. The water is free, and the electricity needed to pump the water to the surface is extremely cheap. The electrical subsidy for agriculture makes up nearly half of Tamil Nadu's large deficit.

Everything is for sale in the gray area between urban India and its farmlands. Hawkers offer banana chips, old shoes, and cellular-telephone service. In many parts of the country, the roads are lined with fruit merchants selling fat yellow mangoes or pyramids of limes. Around Chennai, though, water is the ripest fruit. I counted more than a dozen brightly painted twelve-thousand-litre water tankers, each bearing a different company name: Indira Water Supply, Thiramlu Water Supply, Mahindra, Shree Krishna Sharashine, Beven, High Class, Hrahana. As we drove along the dusty roads, Parasuraman, who grew up near Chennai, explained why there were so many tankers: "Indian farmers are good capitalists, and, when a good capitalist has a product that everybody wants, he sells it." These days, water earns more than rice. A local farmer told me, "I have three acres of land, and spend around seven thousand rupees"—about a hundred and fifty dollars—"an acre. My entire family works on the farm for six months of the year, at the end of which I might get twelve thousand rupees per acre. Most of it goes toward paying interest on loans. I have a two-hundred-square-foot well, and it gives me more income than farming does."

Permitting farmers to exploit the nation's most valuable resource has led to inequities that are even more striking than those in the cities: rich men plunder their land at will, installing powerful bore wells driven by engines that can draw the water not only from their farms but also from the land of their neighbors—to whom they then sell that water. The day before I went to Vellavedu, I had visited S. Janakarajan in his office at the Madras Institute of Development Studies. Janakarajan, an intense man with bunches of white shooting through his mop of black hair, has written widely on the water conflicts between Indian cities and the rural areas surrounding them. "This is just a mad race," he said. "I call it 'competitive deepening.' You deepen your well and suck my water out, so I have to deepen my well even further to get yours. You went down sixty feet, so I will go to seventy feet. This is going on all the time, but it cannot continue indefinitely. There is one chance to get this water. If you win, somebody else loses."

He stood up, shook his head, and walked to a map of Tamil Nadu. "If there is an aquifer that should be shared by only four people, it is shared by ten. That way, nobody benefits. But who stops it? There is no law against it. No real property laws. You just have millions of farmers trying to drain the same wells. The entire irrigation system is based on competition, not on sharing. And certainly not on the idea of conservation." The ponds, lakes, and reservoirs around Chennai have been badly neglected. In many cases, as the city has spread, real-estate developers have simply built over the reservoirs, or used them as toxic dumps. "Chennai does not really have a water crisis," Janakarajan said. "This is a man-made crisis, a policy crisis. Politicians love to talk about architecture and new buildings. Water bores them. They don't want to plan for growth, so growth makes its own rules."

Many of the new wells in the area were drilled on the edge of the road, like gas stations, which makes it easier for the trucks to gain access. I stopped in front of the V.B.R. Drinking Water company—a single tanker that sells water to people in Chennai after buying it from local farms. The truck makes a dozen trips each day, and the proprietor, whose name was Selvaraj, assured me that he turns a nice profit. He said that he had been running the business for two years, but he wasn't eager to elaborate. "We sell what people buy," he said with a shrug. The G.M.R. Water Supply company was just a hundred metres down the road. A giant hose snaked from the back of a shed and into the tanker. The heat muffled all sound except the furious banging of a pump in the field.

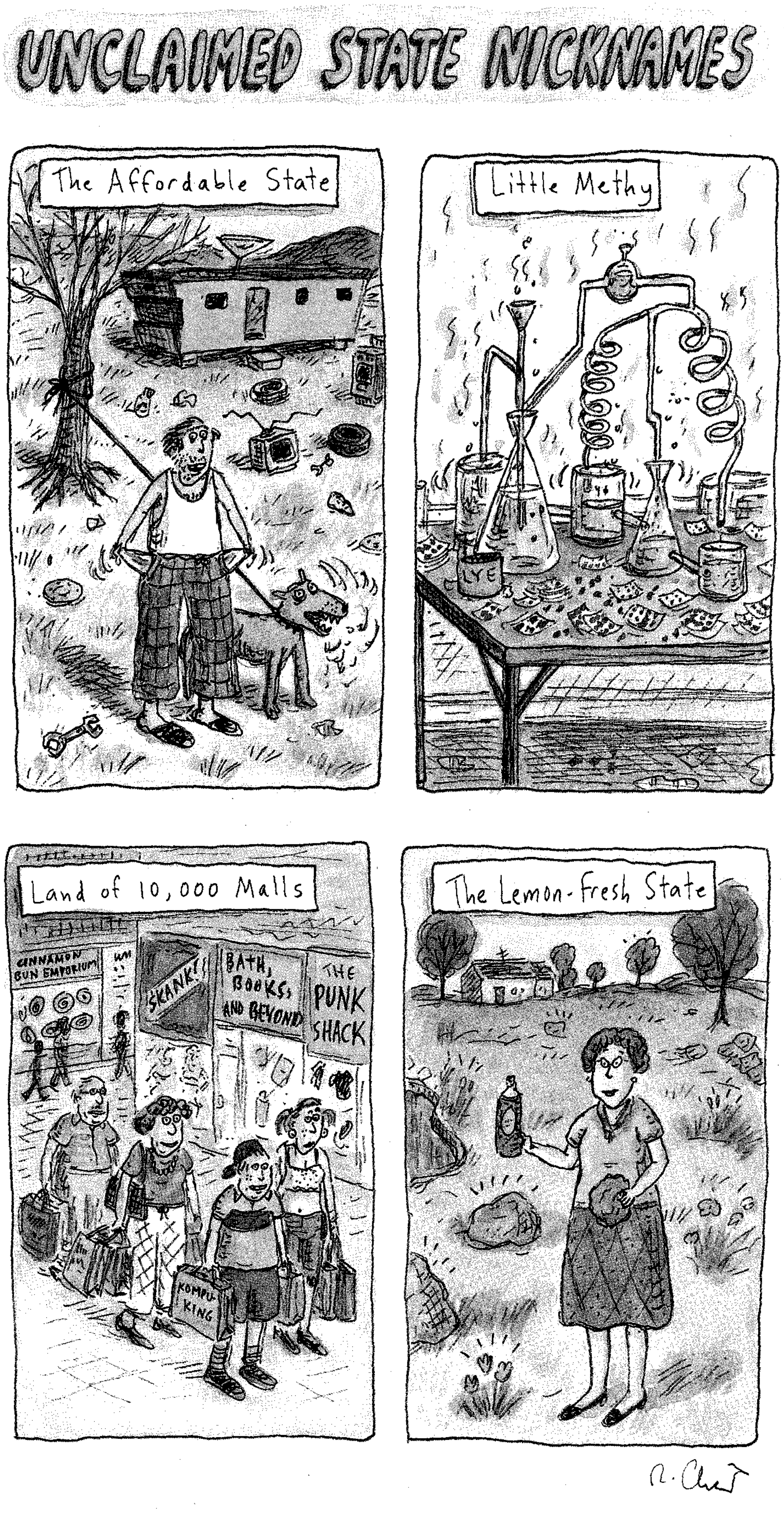
Parasuraman and I drove on, to a

farm next to the local Coca-Cola bottling plant. When Indians complain about water, they complain about Coke, which has become a symbol of the intrusiveness of foreign companies. "They come here and take what they want," one of the farmworkers told me. "As much water as they can get." It is one of the farmers' most firmly held convictions, but it happens not to be true. Unlike local farmers, Coca-Cola pays for its electricity at market rates. "The Indian approach is that industry should just pay, pay, pay," John Briscoe told me when I met with him in Washington, D.C. Briscoe, the World Bank's country director in Brazil, was for many years the bank's senior water adviser. "Industry uses a small fraction of the water, and it is supposed to pay a hundred per cent of the bill," he said. "It's legalized madness."

Any call for change is greeted by farmers saying that they will die without their human right to water. "If it's a human right for farmers, shouldn't it also be a human right for people in the slums, or poor people on the land in villages?" Briscoe said. "I am a hugely optimistic person, and I think that most problems are overblown, they can be corrected and prevented. The problem with groundwater is that it actually can become irreversible. If you wait too long and waste too much, there is no way back. I worry that that is happening in India. They need innovation. More conservation, more variation in crops. They need to harvest their water and charge for its use. And of course they must have more storage. Much more storage. You can't live on the amount of water they store in India." In the world of hydrology, storage is a code word. It means "dam," and nobody wants to talk about dams.

The Chinese character for "political order" is based on the symbol for "water," and the meaning has always been clear: those who control water control people. For centuries, the most effective way to control water has been to build a dam. No public works have had greater impact on their environments than the world's many colossal dams, and the largest by far were built in the twentieth century. It took sixty-six million tons of concrete to construct the

SKETCHBOOK BY ROZ CHAST



"Howard! I thought you'd run off with another woman!"

• •

Hoover Dam, which tamed the Colorado River and formed Lake Mead, a reservoir that holds more than nine trillion gallons of water. In Egypt, the Aswan High Dam required twenty times more stone than was used in the Great Pyramid of Giza. When the Three Gorges Dam, on the Yangtze River, is completed, in 2009, it will be the biggest hydroelectric dam in the world. "One of the things Hoover set in motion was a change in the character of the world's waterways, permanently altering the ecosystems of entire drainage basins," Marq de Villiers wrote in his compelling cultural history, "Water." "And in at least one case, the Nile, permanently changing a flow pattern that had sustained civilization for five thousand years."

Few people understood the power of a dam to influence the life of a nation better than Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. Dedicating the Bhakra Dam, in 1963, he said, "Bhakra-Nangal Project is something tremendous, something stupendous, something which shakes you up when you see it. Bhakra, the new temple of resurgent India, is the symbol of India's progress." Dams, and the large projects that often come with them—pipelines, aqueducts, water-filtration plants—have benefitted billions of people. By the middle of the twentieth century, they had become a defining symbol of man's attempt to govern nature, an effort that was nowhere more vigorous than in the United States, where there are more than seventy-five thousand dams. "That is a new dam nearly every day since we signed the Declaration of Independence," Peter Rogers, the Harvard professor, pointed out. "The environmental impact of these things cannot be ignored." Large swaths of the American West wouldn't be habitable if not for the dams along the Colorado River. In 1933, poverty in much of the Tennessee Valley was acute, crop yields were low, and there was no electricity. Then President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Tennessee Valley Authority. The T.V.A. built forty-two dams and reservoirs, which harnessed enough water to generate electricity for tens of thousands of farms, enabling thousands of people to use modern appliances. Clean water became widely available, and so did electricity. In India, the dam at Bhakra helped increase crop yields and double the income of agricultural laborers in the region. In 2000, a typical year, Bhakra produced thirty million tons of the grain purchased by Indian government agencies—eighty-five per cent of the total.

Dams have made it possible for the United States and Australia to store five thousand cubic metres of water per person. Middle-income countries like Morocco, Mexico, and China each store about a thousand. The per-capita figure for India is two hundred cubic metres—not much better than that for the poorest countries in Africa. Without sufficient water storage, irrigation becomes nearly impossible, and the relationship between irrigation and prosperity is absolute: if your land is fed by water, you are far less likely to be poor and far more likely to be educated.

In the past few decades, however, large dams have fallen out of favor in many places. One reason is that sixty per cent of the world's biggest rivers have already been dammed. But public opposition to dams has been growing for years, and in 2000 the World Bank joined the World Conservation Union to publish a definitive study of their value and impact. It was a remarkable decision on the part of both groups, since the bank has played a central role in developing dams, and the Conservation Union, based near Geneva, has often expressed doubt that they are worth the money or the ecological and human disruption they cause. The groups' joint report was thorough and largely negative. While "dams have made an important and significant contribution to human development, and benefits derived from them have been considerable," it stated, "in too many cases an unacceptable and often unnecessary price has been paid to secure those benefits, especially in social and environmental terms, by people displaced, by communities downstream, by taxpayers and by the natural environment." The report found that often, despite investments of tens of billions of dollars, dams do not achieve their goals for irrigation, power generation, or flood control. In the twentieth century alone, dams displaced as many as eighty million people, in addition to destroying forests and decimating fisheries.

Today, India has at least three thousand large dams and a thousand more under construction. The most bitterly opposed of them lie along the Narmada River in the state of Gujarat, which borders Pakistan and the Arabian Sea. These dams were conceived in the nineteen-forties, but construction didn't begin for thirty years. When the Narmada project is finished, the dams are supposed to bring irrigation to more than eighteen thousand square kilometres of drought-prone land. But many local residents will be flooded from their homes, and activists, infuriated that the government has offered little in the way of compensation, have chained themselves to boulders and gone on hunger strikes in an effort to stop construction. Narmada has set off a national debate, not just over dams but over the environmental future of the country, as well as the conventional view of progress.

By far the most eloquent and extreme voice of opposition has been that of Arundhati Roy, the author of the Booker Prize-winning novel "The God of Small Things." "For over half a century, we've believed that Big Dams would deliver the people of India from hunger and poverty," she says. "The opposite has happened." In 1999, Roy published an inflammatory and highly influential essay, "The Greater Common Good," in which she argued that the most important of the Narmada dams, Sardar Sarovar, had raised doubts about the nature of Indian democracy. "Big Dams are obsolete," she wrote. "They're a Government's way of accumulating authority . . . a brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich." The issue is so controversial that in April, when Aamir Khan, one of India's best-known movie stars, appeared at Sardar Sarovar to say that the government should do more to help the people it is displacing there, theatre owners in Gujarat responded by refusing to show Khan's most recent film, "Fanaa." Khan, who says that he is opposed not to the dam but only to the way local residents have been treated, has been denounced by state officials, and effigies of the actor have been burned. Although Prime Minister Manmohan Singh released a statement defending Khan's right to speak out, leaders in Gujarat have demanded that he apologize for his public stance. Khan has refused. "I want the people of Gujarat to get water," he said. "I love the people of Gujarat ... but there should be justice for the displaced people, too."

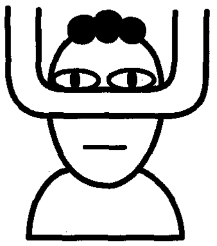
Opponents of dams argue that conservation is a better way to protect resources, while supporters insist that without them successful development is impossible. "We can always tell people in other countries not to build dams," Rogers told me. "It's easy to say. You have to remember we had many more years to construct this infrastructure in Europe and America than they have had in the developing world. They are doing in India in a few decades what took us two hundred years. They are doing it in a noisy democracy, not secretly or without debate, as in China. Now, dams have flaws, but sometimes people forget they don't only have flaws. For India, with millions of hectares of crops and rain that falls for only a few months every year, you have to store water. Dams are simply a hydrological and geophysical must."

When people suggest that pollution, population growth, waste, and bad policy have already placed unacceptable burdens on the global supply of freshwater, or that industrial development in places like India and China can only hasten inevitable environmental catastrophe, Peter Gleick likes to remind them about the Cuyahoga River. On June 22, 1969, the Cuyahoga caught fire outside Cleveland, Ohio. Flames rose five stories high, and fireboats rushed from Lake Erie to bring the blaze under control. It wasn't the first time that a river in a heavily industrial region of the United States had burst into flames. But no environmental disaster has had a more visceral impact on the national consciousness. *Time* described the Cuyahoga as the river that "oozes rather than flows," and in which a person "does not drown. He decays." "It was a very important day for this country," Gleick told me in his office at the Victorian mansion that houses the main offices of the Pacific Institute. "Before that, we were doing stupid things with water. Industries could dump whatever crap they wanted into rivers. There were no controls, no constraints. The Cuyahoga was coated with a sheet of flammable waste. And when it caught fire we passed the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and other measures, too. Everything began to change."

Every week, scholars, governments, ecological activists, and hydrologists produce thick reports about water scarcity and its relationship to irrigation, urban decay, and human health. Perhaps no one is more prolific or authoritative than Gleick, whose biennial report, "The World's Water," is a selective encyclopedia of the world's aquatic resources. Gleick is a reserved, tweedy-looking man with thinning hair, a short, graying beard, and, behind his circular wire-rimmed glasses, the searching eyes of an East Bay idealist. Although he received a Ph.D. in hydrology from Berkeley and studied engineering as an undergraduate at Yale, he knew by the end of his senior year that he didn't want to build dams for a living. He has spent his professional life searching through obscure collections of data for patterns of water use. He lectures frequently, and can cite dreary statistics, evidence of governmental inaction, and worrisome trends with great rhetorical force. But his central message, which is often ignored by both planners and environmentalists, is surprisingly hopeful. "It is a little-known fact that the United States today uses far less water per person, and less water in total, than we did twenty-five years ago," he said. "It's a shocker. People don't believe it, but it's true. This is an indication that things are not the way people think they are. It is not really because we are trying to cut our water use, although that is true in some regions of the United States, and particularly in the West. But we have changed the nature of our economy, and we have become more efficient at doing what we want to do."

The amount of water that Americans used for nearly all purposes rose steadily from the beginning of the twentieth century, through the Second World War, and into the seventies. Every projection indicated that the growth would continue. Yet, in 1980, the amount of water we withdrew from rivers, lakes, and reservoirs reached its peak and then began to subside. Despite increases in wealth, industrial productivity, and the size of the American population, the decline has accelerated.

There are several methods to assess the way we use water. Withdrawals measure how much we actually take from the earth. Some of the water used in factories or homes can be recycled. On the other hand, once water is consumed by agriculture or polluting industries, it is gone—at least until it rises to the clouds, evaporates, and returns as rain or snow. In the United States, total water withdrawals now stand at levels not seen since the end of the fifties; per-capita withdrawals—the amount each of us uses every day—have fallen by twenty-five per cent. This is true even though the population has grown by more than a hundred million. Among the reasons are higher energy costs, which force consumers and industries to become more efficient in their use of water. (More freshwater is used to produce electricity than for any purpose other than farming.) Environmental laws, enacted in the seventies, forced factories to cut back on the amount of wastewater they discharged into American rivers. Many industries quickly realized that the cheapest way to meet the new requirements was to use less water. Conservation is another reason for the changes; federal and state laws now require efficiency improvements for many American appliances. (Toilets, for instance, use more water than any other domestic appliance. Over the past decade, the average amount of water in a standard flush has fallen from six gallons to 1.6.) Most important, perhaps, growing pressure on water resources—particularly for farmers in the West—has forced dramatic improvements in how much food we are able to grow with every gallon of water.



Finland, parts of Australia, much of Europe, and even Hong Kong also have experienced decreases in per-capita water consumption. As countries become more industrialized, pollution and economic inequality increase—often dramatically—and so does the use and abuse of natural resources. Eventually, though, as the gross domestic product of a nation rises, technologies mature, efficiency improves, and so does the amount of attention paid to human welfare and the environment. (This general phenomenon is known as the Kuznets Curve, after the Nobel Prize-winning economist Simon Kuznets.) In 1965, Japan needed fifty million litres of water to produce a million dollars' worth of goods. By 1989, the figure, after adjusting for inflation, had dropped to thirteen million litres. Such statistics suggest a fundamental change in how people live, and Gleick, among others, has argued that, in order to abandon what he calls the "hard path," planners, economists, and public officials must begin to address water use in an entirely new way. "The hard path treats our water problems as a simple issue of getting more from the environment, of finding new ways to take water from rivers and lakes and aquifers and move it farther and farther and farther away, completely independent of any analysis of how we are moving that water or how we are using it," Gleick said. "That is what the World Bank guys and traditional water engineers were trained to do. That is what we did in the twentieth century. It brought great benefits, but it has not solved all our water problems, and it is not going to.

"People who build dams don't understand the concept of efficiency, and neither do water managers," he continued. "I am a hydrologist. I was taught how to satisfy the needs of a hundred thousand people by making a dam. I can design a dam on a virgin river to meet those needs. I was never taught in engineering school to think about how people actually use water."

Dams are the principal instrument of the hard path. Desalination plants are another. If, through some alchemy, we could wring enough freshwater from the sea, our water problems would be solved. The concept is ancient, and, oddly enough, it arose at a time when salt, not water, was the more valuable commodity. Thomas Jefferson, seeking a way to provide freshwater to ships at sea, was the first advocate of desalination in America, and in the sixties John F. Kennedy strongly supported the idea, saying that desalination "can do more to raise men and women from lives of poverty and desperation than any other scientific advance."

There are two main ways to separate freshwater from salty seawater. Distillation, the traditional method, relies on heat to evaporate water and remove salt and impurities. It requires a lot of fuel and can be prohibitively expensive. A technology like reverse osmosis uses a more modern approach: water is forced at high pressure through a series of tightly wrapped membranes so that the water molecules, which are smaller than impurities and salt, pass through. The rest is then discharged as brine into the sea, where it can cause serious ecological damage. There are nearly twenty thousand desalination plants in operation today, most in countries with little water but no shortage of either oil or money. In the Persian Gulf, desalination accounts for nearly forty per cent of municipal water supplies.

Reverse osmosis has become significantly more efficient in the last few years, and in many places the cost of producing potable water has fallen by half or more, making it a valuable tool. In Singapore, for example, ten per cent of the water is produced by Asia's biggest and most economical desalination plant. Yet for developing countries such solutions are unlikely to be affordable soon. In India, water produced by desalination plants would cost a hundred times as much as water taken from a well. Nonetheless, the government of Tamil Nadu is about to build a plant that would provide a hundred million gallons of water to the city of Chennai each day. That would make it one of the largest such facilities in the world. "This is complete rubbish," Janakarajan, the water-policy expert from the Madras Institute of Development Studies, told me. "Desalination is a five-star solution for a one-star country. We are poor. We need to capture our rain and store it. But that would be too easy, and it would make too much sense." Like most of his colleagues, Janakarajan argues that recycling industrial wastewater, achieving greater agricultural efficiencies, cutting the leaks on pipelines (most Indian cities lose at least forty per cent of their water to leaks), and repairing neglected ponds and misused reservoirs would provide the city with all the water it needs. "Everyone wants to solve this problem with smart technology," he said. "We are more likely to solve it by simply being smart."

One way to be smarter about water is to take better advantage of the global economy. It makes no sense to measure water use solely by how many times we flush the toilet, wash our cars, or take a bath. Those things matter, of course, but far more water is used to manufacture food, paper, and cotton. When a Toyota sedan or a cotton sweater is imported into the United States, the water it took to make those products is imported along with them. When we sell our grain, processed food, or other manufactured products on international markets, the United States is also exporting the water that is contained within those products. Economists use the concept, known as "virtual water," to illustrate a simple fact: it is often cheaper to import something like grain or cotton than it is to transport water. The amount of virtual water contained in ordinary products is often surprisingly large: a recent study from the Netherlands found that a standard cup of coffee required a hundred and forty litres of water, most of which is used to grow the coffee plant. This means that it takes more than a thousand drops of water to make one drop of coffee. Most of the water used to make that coffee is not actually Dutch, because the coffee is grown in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Virtual water is one way to use less water on agriculture in a place where it is needed for other purposes.

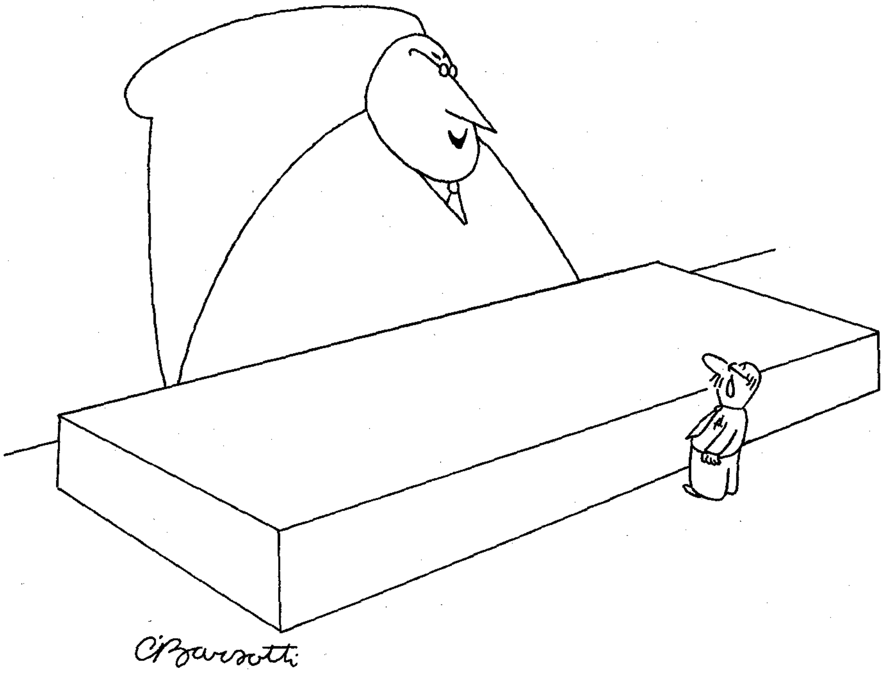
Since the nineteen-seventies, nearly all water-demand forecasts issued by governments and international agencies have grossly overestimated future needs. This has led engineers and planners to continue pushing for giant public-works projects. "These are the nuclear people from the seventies, the big-dam people from the sixties, and now they are the desalination people," Gleick said, stressing that, in theory, he was opposed to none of them. "All these people seek large magic bullets to solve the world's problems. They all have this very strong belief that there is one solution out there and if only we could build enough of it or find it our problems would be over. It drives me crazy."

In many parts of the world, there is now almost as much talk about dismantling dams as there is of building them. People in San Francisco have debated the fate of the Hetch Hetchy dam, the city's principal source of freshwater, for fifty years. Hetch Hetchy is a valley in Yosemite National Park carved by glaciers and surrounded by sheer granite walls and waterfalls. The dam provides two hundred and sixty million gallons of nearly pristine water each day to more than two and a half million residents of the San Francisco Bay Area.

The creation of Hetch Hetchy, in 1913, outraged the newly formed Sierra Club. Its founder, John Muir, led the opposition to flooding the valley, which gave rise to the modern American environmental movement. "Dam Hetch Hetchy!," Muir wrote in 1908. "As well dam for water-tanks, the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man." In July, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger released a report suggesting that Hetch Hetchy may no longer be necessary—several new reservoirs have been developed in the past twenty years—although the cost of tearing it down and building a plant to filter the new sources of water would be enormous. "I think Hetch Hetchy is going to go," Adam Werbach, a former president of the Sierra Club, told me. Werbach is one of five members of the San Francisco Power Utility Commission, which regulates water for the city. "The question is really when and how," he said, pointing out that it is technically feasible to dismantle the dam now, though it is unlikely to happen soon. "This was one of the most beautiful places on earth, and you have to ask yourself, 'Do you want your grandchildren to hike through the lost valley of the Gods, or do you want that old six-gallon flush toilet?'"

Until recently, nobody bothered to ask such questions—and nobody needed to. But the biggest potential new source of water, not just in Delhi or Dar es Salaam but in Tokyo and San Francisco as well, is us. By conserving water and pricing it more realistically, we can dramatically reduce our needs. Agriculture will always require more water than any other human endeavor, but that doesn't mean it has to be wasted. Until the sixties, none of the vineyards in California used drip irrigation, which applies minimal amounts of water directly to the roots of crops. Today, seventy per cent of them do, using less water to produce the same yield (or the same amount of water to produce more). Some farmers have begun to level their fields with lasers, making irrigation even more precise. And although genetically modified crops remain controversial, researchers have produced several strains of rice that require only a fraction of the water most farmers use today.

"I would argue that almost everything we do on earth we could do with less water," Gleick told me. "And that is the soft path. This is a different way of thinking than in the twentieth century, when the simple answer to every demand was 'Let's go get some water.' That is what led to the destruction of the Aral Sea, the dewatering of the Colorado River basin in Mexico and the Yellow River, in China." He stopped for a moment and stared at his hands. "This is really good news, you know. Because it means we can do better. We don't need to run out of water. We just need to think more seriously about how we can avoid using it." ♦



"You're out, Hodges—it's time to make way for a younger loser."

PASCAL MAITRE / COSMOS; STUART FRANKLIN / MAGNUM

FICTION

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

BY ALEKSANDAR HEMON

It was a perfect African night, straight out of Conrad: the air was pasty and still with humidity; the night smelled of burned flesh and fecundity; the darkness outside was spacious and uncarvable. I felt malarial, though it was probably just travel fatigue. I envisioned millions of millipedes gathering on the ceiling above my bed, a fleet of bats flapping ravenously in the trees below my window. But the most troubling thing was the ceaseless roll of drums: a sonorous, ponderous thudding that hovered around me. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer, I couldn't tell.

I was sixteen, at the age when fear arouses inspiration, so I turned on the light, dug a brand-new Moleskine journal out of my suitcase, and had just managed to write, on the first page, "Kinshasa 7.7.1983," when I heard my parents' bedroom door slam open and Tata cursing and stomping away. I leaped out of bed and followed him into the living room, where he had already flipped on the lights. I bumped into Mama, who was cradling her worrisome bosom in her arms; Sestra was there, too, pressing her face into Mama's side. All the lights were on now; a gang of moths fluttered hopelessly inside a light fixture; there were cries and screams; cymbals crashed all around us. It was terrifying.

"Spinelli," Tata exclaimed. "What a dick."

Tata slept in flannel pajamas that were far more appropriate for an Alpine ski resort than for Africa—air-conditioning allegedly irritated his kidneys. Before he vanished into the thrumming murk of our building's stairwell, he put on a pith helmet, lest his bald dome be exposed to drafts. I stood in my underwear, my pen still in hand. The possibility that he might not return flickered in the dark, but it did not occur to me to go after him. The stairwell light went on and we heard a plaintive chime. The drums continued to roll. Tata abandoned the bell and started pounding on the door, shouting in his stuttering English, "Spinelli, you are very crazy. Stop noise. We are sleep. It is four in the morning."

Our apartment was on the sixth floor; there must have been scores of people living in the building, but it appeared to have been abandoned. As soon as the stairwell

light clicked off, the drumming stopped; the show was over. The door opened and a nasal American voice said, "I'm sorry, man. I absolutely apologize."

By the time I went back to bed, it was dawn already. In the trees outside, a nation of birds had replaced the bats and were now atwitter in a paroxysm of meaningless life. Sleep seemed beyond me; nor could I write. Smoking on the balcony, I waited for everything to make sense. Down on the street, a barely clad man squatted by a cardboard box with cigarettes lined up on top of it, as though he were guarding them from some invisible peril.

In the early eighties, Tata was mostly absent from Sarajevo, working in Zaire as a minor Yugoslav diplomat in charge of communications (whatever that meant). Meanwhile, back home, I responded to the infelicities of adolescence and the looming iniquities of adulthood by retreating into books; Sestra, not yet a teen-ager, was oblivious of the aches sprouting inside me; Mama was mid-life, miserable and lonely, though I could not see this at the time, with my nose stuck in a book. I read compulsively, only occasionally surfacing to reality. I read all night, all day; at school I kept a book hidden under my desk, a felony frequently punished by a junta of class bullies who made me lick the pages until my tongue was black with ink.

I met Azra while checking out books from the school library, and I immediately liked the readerly quietude on her bespectacled face. I walked her home, slowing down whenever I had something to say, stopping whenever she did. She had no interest in "The Catcher in the Rye"; I had not read "Quo Vadis," feigned interest in "The Peasant Uprising." We shared an interest in "The Dwarf from a Forgotten Country," even though it was a children's book. And it was clear that we also shared a passion for imagining lives that we could live through others—a necessary ingredient in any love. We started dating, which meant that we often read to each other on a bench by the Miljacka, making out only when we ran out of things to talk about, kissing cautiously, as though letting ourselves go would have exhausted the quaint, manageable intimacy we had accrued. So when Tata announced, on returning to Sarajevo for a leave, that we would all spend the summer of '83 in Africa together, I felt a strange relief: if Azra and I were apart, we could resist temptation and eschew the taint that the body inflicts upon the soul. I promised I would write to her every day—in my journal, as letters from Africa would have arrived long after my return. I would record every thought, I told her, every feeling, every experience, and, as soon as I came back, we would reimagine it all together, reading, as it were, the same book.

There were many things that I wanted to note down that first night in Kinshasa: the west ablaze, the east impenetrably dark as we crossed the equator at sunset; my perfect recollection of the smell of her hair; the line from a book that we had both liked so much—"I have to find my way home before the fall, before the leaves cover the path." But I wrote nothing and assuaged my conscience by ascribing this failure to the drumming disturbance. What I didn't write stayed in the back room of my mind, like the birthday pres-

"Just because I didn't tell you to shut up doesn't mean I wasn't listening."

ents I was not allowed to open until everyone had left the party.

The following morning, I found Sestra in the living room, staring with vague fascination at a puny man in a T-shirt with an image of an angel pierced by an arrow in midair. Mama was sitting across the coffee table from the man, her legs crossed, listening intently to his high-pitched warbling.

"*Svratio komšija* Spinelli," she said. "*Nemam pojma šta priča.*"

"Good morning," I said.

"Good afternoon, buddy," Spinelli said. "The day is almost over." He exposed a set of teeth that descended evenly in size, like organ pipes, from the center toward the cheeks. He had both of his hands parked on his thighs, and they were calmly immobile, as though resting before their next task—which was to push apart the two curls parenthesizing his forehead.

"Sorry for the noise," he said. "A bored dog does crazy things."

At sixteen, I spent a lot of energy affecting boredom: the eye-roll; the practiced blankness of expression; the terse, short answers to parental inquisition. I had built an iron-clad shield of indifference that allowed me to escape, roam, and return to my cell without anyone's noticing. But that first week in Africa the boredom was real. I could not read; I kept scanning the same—twenty-seventh—page of "Heart of Darkness" and could not move beyond it. I tried to write to Azra, but could come up with nothing to say, probably because there was too much to say.

There was certainly nothing to do. I was not allowed go out alone into the human jungle of Kinshasa. For a while I watched TV, broadcasts of Mobutu's rants and commercials featuring cans of coconut oil floating in the blue sky of affordable happiness. Once or twice, in the middle of the day, I even felt a rare, inexplicable desire to be with my family, but Tata was at work, Sestra had her Walkman turned way up, and Mama was remote, interned in the kitchen, probably crying. The ceiling fan spun sluggishly, a cruel reminder that time here passed at the same mind-numbing speed.

Tata was a great promiser, a fabulist of possibilities. In Sarajevo, he had projected onto the vast, blank canvas of our socialist provincialism a Kinshasa that was a hive of neocolonial pleasures: exclusive clubs with pools and tennis courts; diplomatic receptions frequented by the international jet set and spies; cosmopolitan casinos and exotic lounges; safaris in the wilderness; and Phillip, a native cook whom he had hired away from a Belgian by increasing his piddling wage to a slightly less piddling amount. That first uneventful week, these promises were drably betrayed; Phillip didn't even show up for work. When Tata came home from the Embassy, we had humdrum dinners that Mama improvised from what she had discovered in the fridge: wizened peppers and sunken papayas, peanut paste and some kind of animal flesh that may have been goat meat.

Determined to dispel the cloud of tedium hanging over us, Tata finally put in a call to the Yugoslav Ambassador and invited himself and us to the Ambassador's residence in Gombe, where all the important diplomats lived. The mansions there were large, with wide lawns and majestic flowers blooming in impeccably groomed bushes; the venerable Congo flowed serenely. His Excellency and his excellent wife were polite and devoid of any human vigor. We sat in their receiving room, and the adults passed around statements ("Kinshasa is strange"; "Kinshasa is really small") as if handing around a sugar bowl. Exotic trophies were carefully positioned around the room: a piece of Antwerp bobbin lace on the wall; an ancient Mesopotamian rock on the coffee table; on the bookshelf a picture of their Excellencies on a snow-capped mountain. A servant with an implausible red sash brought in the drinks—Sestra and I were each given a glass of lemonade with a long silver spoon. I didn't dare to move, and when Sestra, abruptly and inexplicably, rolled like a happy dog on the ankle-deep Afghan rug I feared that our parents would renounce us.

As soon as we returned home, I went up to Spinelli's place. He did not seem surprised to see me, nor did he ask what had brought me around. "Come on in," he said, smoking, a drink in his hand, music blasting behind him. I lit up; I had not smoked all day, and I was starved for nicotine. The smoke descended into my lungs like feathery silk, then out, thickly, through my nose; it was so beautiful I was breathless. Spinelli was air drumming along to the loud music, a cigarette dangling from his lips. " 'Black Dog,' " he said. "God damn." In the far corner, under the window, there was a set of drums; its golden cymbals trembled in the stream from the air-conditioner.

Between his imaginary drum solos and bridges, Spinelli made unsolicited confessions: he had grown up in a rough Chicago neighborhood and beat it as soon as he could; he had lived in Africa forever; he worked for the U.S. government and could not tell me what his job was, for if he did he would have to kill me. He started each sentence sitting down and finished it standing up. He never stopped moving. Space organized itself around him; he exuded so much of himself that I felt absent. Only after I had left his apartment, exhausted, could I really think at all. And then I thought that he was a true American, a liar and a braggart, and that hanging out with him was far more stimulating than the shackles of family life or the excellent diplomats in Gombe. At some point during his restless monologue, he christened me, for no apparent reason, Blunderpuss.

I went back upstairs a couple of days later, and then again the following day. Mama and Tata seemed fine with that; if I removed my boredom, we could avoid long stretches of crabby silence. They must also have thought that engaging with the real world and its inhabitants without actually leaving the building was good for me, and I got to practice my English, too. As for me, I could smoke as much as I wanted at Spinelli's; the music was much louder than my parents would ever have permitted; and he poured more whiskey into my glass before it was even half empty. But most of all I enjoyed his stories: he delivered them slouching back on the sofa, blowing smoke toward the ceiling fan, sipping his J&B, interrupting his delivery for every drum solo. There may be a taint of death, a flavor of mortality, in lies, but Spinelli's were fun to listen to.

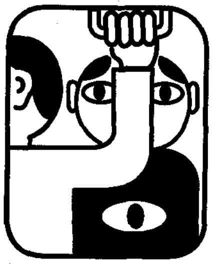
In high school, he'd run a cigarette-selling business and had regular sex with his geography teacher. He'd hitchhiked across America: in Oklahoma, he'd drunk with Indians who fed him mushrooms that took him to where their spirits lived—the spirits had big asses with two holes, both of which smelled equally of shit; in Idaho, he'd lived in a cave with a guy who watched the sky all day long, waiting for a fleet of black helicopters to descend upon them; he'd smuggled cattle from Mexico into Texas, cars from Texas to Mexico. Then he'd joined the Army: avoiding rough deployment by applying onion to his dick so as to fake an infection; whoring around in Germany, cutting up a Montenegrin pimp in a disco. Then Africa: sneaking into Angola to help out Savimbi's freedom fighters; training the Ugandan special forces with the Israelis; setting up a honey trap in Durban. He told his tales laterally, moving across his life without regard for chronology.

Afterward, I would lie in my bed, trying to organize his stream of consciousness in my giddy head so that I could write it down for Azra. Only then could I see the loopholes in the texture of his tales, the inconsistencies and contradictions and the plain bullshit. Once I was out of his proximity, he made little sense; he had to be physically present in his own narratives to make them plausible. Therefore I sought his presence; I kept going upstairs.

One night when I went upstairs, Spinelli was all dressed and ready to go, wearing a black unbuttoned shirt, reeking of cologne, a gold chain dangling below his Adam's apple. He lit a cigarette in the doorway, inhaled, and said "Let's go!" and I followed without a question. It did not even cross my mind to tell my parents where I was going. They never came to check on me when I was at Spinelli's. It turned out that we were going to a casino around the corner.

"The guy who owns the casino is Croatian," Spinelli said. "Used to be in the Foreign Legion, fought here, then in Biafra. I don't wanna know the things he did. We do business sometimes, and his daughter likes me pretty well, too."

I could not see his lips moving as we walked; his voice was disembodied. We turned the corner and there was a splendid neon sign that said "PLAYBOY CASINO," the "S" and the final "O" flickering uncertainly. A few white cars and military Jeeps were parked in the gravel lot. On the stairs were several hookers in ridiculously high heels, neither climbing nor descending, as if they were afraid they might fall if they moved. But move they did as we passed; one of them grabbed my forearm and turned me toward her. She wore a helmetlike purple wig, and earrings as elaborate as Christmas ornaments; her breasts were pushed up by her tiny bra, so that I could see half of her left nipple. I stood petrified until Spinelli released me from her grip. "You don't fuck much, do you, Blunderpuss?" he said.



Three men were sitting at the roulette table, all plainly drunk, their heads falling on their chests between the revolutions of the wheel. A heavy fog of masculine recklessness hung over the table, the green of the felt fractured by piles of colorful chips. One of the men won and snapped out of his torpor long enough to gather up the chips with both arms, as though embracing a child. "Watch the croupier steal from them," Spinelli said with delight. "They're going to lose it all before they get another drink, then they'll lose some more." I did watch the croupier, but could not see how the stealing happened: when the players won, he pushed the chips toward them; when they lost, he raked the pile toward himself. It all seemed simple and honest, but I believed Spinelli. I had already started composing a description of the place for Azra: the cone of smoke rising to the light above the blackjack table; the hysterical flashing of the two slot machines in the corner; the man standing at the bar in the attire of a plantation owner—a light linen suit and a straw hat—his right hand hanging down like a sleeping dog's head, a ribbon of cigarette smoke passing slowly between his knuckles.

"Let me introduce you to Jacques," Spinelli said. "He's the boss."

Jacques put the cigarette in his mouth, shook Spinelli's hand, then looked me over without saying a word.

"This is Blunderpuss—he's Bogdan's kid," Spinelli said. Jacques's face was perfectly square, his nose triangular; his neck was a stovepipe of flesh. His expression bespoke the chummy ruthlessness of someone whose life was organized around profit and survival; as far as he was concerned, I did not exist in the world of straightforward facts. He put out his cigarette and, in English marred with clunky Croatian consonants, said to Spinelli, "What I am going to do with those bananas? They are rotting."

Spinelli looked at me, shook his head in bemused disbelief, and said, "Put them in a fruit salad."

Jacques grinned back at him and said, "Let me tell you joke. Mother has very ugly child, horrible, she goes on train, sits in coupe. People come in her coupe, they see child, is very ugly, they cannot look, they leave, go away, disgusting child. Nobody sits with them. Then comes man, smiles at mother, smiles at child, sits down, reads newspapers. Mother thinks, Good man, likes my child, is real good man. Then man takes one banana and asks mother, 'Does your monkey want banana?'"

Spinelli didn't laugh, not even when Jacques repeated the punch line: "Does your monkey want banana?" Instead, he asked him, "Is Natalie here?"

I followed Spinelli through a beaded curtain into a room with a blackjack table and four players; they all wore uniforms, one of them sand khaki, the other three olive green. Natalie was the dealer, her fingers long and limber as she placed the cards; her pallor was luminous in the dark room; her arms were skinny, with no muscles whatsoever; she had bruises on her forearms, scratches on her biceps. On her shoulder she had a vaccination mark, like the imprint of a small coin. Spinelli sat at the table and nodded at her, slamming a cigarette pack against his palm. Her cheeks rose, quotation marks forming around her smile. She raised her hand gently, as though lifting a veil, and scratched her forehead with her pinkie. She blinked slowly, calmly, as though pulling her long eyelashes apart required effort. I was enthralled. Natalie was from out of this world, a displaced angel.

From then on, for a while, there were three of us. We went places: Spinelli driving his Land Rover, drumming on the wheel, slapping the dashboard, calling Natalie his Monkeypie; Natalie smoking in the passenger seat, looking out; I in the back, the breeze from the open window blowing her smoke, her intoxicating smell, directly into my face. The three of us: Spinelli, Monkeypie, Blunderpuss, like characters in an adventure novel.

One day, we went to the Cité to look for Phillip, who still hadn't shown up for work. Presumably, this was a means for Spinelli to expiate his drumming sins, arranged between Tata and him. Spinelli and Natalie picked me up at the crack of dawn, the light still diffused by the residue of the humid night. We drove toward the slums, against a crowd marching in antlike columns: men in torn shorts and shirts; women wrapped in cloth, carrying baskets on their heads; swollen-bellied children trotting by their side; emaciated dogs following at a hopeful distance. I had never seen anything so unreal in my life. We turned off onto a dirt road, which became a car-wide path full of mounds and gullies. The Land Rover stirred up a galaxy of dust, even when moving at low speed. Shacks misassembled from rusty tin and cardboard were lined up above a ditch, about to tumble in. I understood what Conrad had meant by "inhabited devastation." A woman with a child tied to her back dipped clothes into tea-colored water and beat the wet tangle with a tennis racquet.

Soon a shouting mob of kids was running after the car. "Check this out," Spinelli said and hit the brakes. The kids slammed into the back of the Land Rover; one of them fell on his ass. "Oh, stop it!" Natalie said. As soon as the car got up some speed, the kids were running after it again; they didn't often see a Land Rover in the Cité. Spinelli hit the brakes again, slapping his thigh with glee. I could see the face of the tallest boy smash against the glass, blood blurting out of his nose. Spinelli's laughter was deep-chested, like the bark of a big dog. It was infectious; I was roaring with laughter myself.

We stopped in front of a church, where a choir was singing with sombre voices. Spinelli went in to leave a message for Phillip while Natalie and I stayed in the car. He pushed his way through the kids, who parted, murmuring, "*Mundele, mundele.*" "It means skinless," Natalie said. The tall boy was still bleeding, but he could not take his eyes off Natalie. She took a picture of him; he wiped his bloody nose and turned away.

"You're gonna have to get yourself a new cook, Blunderpuss," Spinelli said, climbing into his seat. "That's Phillip's funeral they're singing for."

From the Cité we went to the market—Le Grand Marché—and wandered around; it was too early to go home. Bartering in Lingala and English, Spinelli pretended to be interested in a dried monkey, whose hands grasped nothingness with unappetizing despair; he picked through yams but didn't buy any. Natalie took pictures of terrified goats waiting to be slaughtered, of eels still fidgeting in a beaten pot, of worms squirming in a shoebox.

These people had no abstract concept of evil, Spinelli said. For them, it was black magic coming from a particular person, so if you wanted to get rid of the evil spell you eliminated the guy. The same thing with the good: it was not something you could aspire to, the way we did; you either had it or you didn't. He delivered his anthropological lecture while bargaining over an enormous, baroque cluster of bananas, which he bought for nothing and loaded onto his shoulder. You couldn't die of hunger here, he said, because bananas and papayas grew everywhere like weeds. That was why these people had never learned to work; they'd never had to harvest and store food to survive.

A mass of people followed us, offering things we could not possibly need: toilet brushes, knitting needles, figurines carved out of what Spinelli claimed was human bone. I bought a bracelet made of elephant hair and ivory, a gift for Azra.

Later that day, we went to the Inter-Continental and sat in the lounge, where a ponytailed pianist played "As Time Goes By." We ordered colorful cocktails with tiny umbrellas stuck into unknown fruit. There were men in Zairean attire: wide collars, bare chests adorned with gold, hands bejewelled. Spinelli called them the Big Vegetables; they liked to stick out of Mobutu's ass, he said. Those expensive white whores with them came from Brussels or Paris; they spread their legs for two or three months, then took a little pouch of diamonds back home to live it up for the rest of the year. And that man over there was Dr. Slonsky, a Russian who had come twenty years ago, when you had to import ass-wipes from Belgium. He used to be Mobutu's personal physician, but now he only did the Big Vegetables; Mobutu had a Harvard graduate taking care of him these days. Slonsky liked heroin and boys, Spinelli said.

Natalie sucked at her straw, as if she had heard it all already.

Then there was Towser the Brit; his wife worked at the British Embassy. And that scruffy youngster sitting next to him was their Italian boyfriend. They were talking to Millie and Morton Fester, New Yorkers who dealt in tribal art, most of it pilfered away from the natives by the Big Vegetables. Millie wrote fancy porn novels; Morton used to be a photographer for *National Geographic*, trawling the Dark Continent for images. Spinelli actually waved at them and Morton waved back. Somehow, the waving confirmed Spinelli's stories, as though he had conjured them into existence with the motion of his hand.

Then we were joined by Fareed, a Lebanese whose head was as smooth as a billiard ball and whom Spinelli affectionately called Dicknose. He bought us a round of drinks, and, before I could even agree to it, we went up to Dicknose's room, where he opened a black briefcase for us. Inside was a velvet cloth, which he unwrapped, proudly exhibiting a tiny heap of uncut diamonds, sparkling like teeth in a toothpaste commercial. They had just arrived from Kasai, Dicknose said, fresh from the bowels of the earth. Natalie touched the heap with her fingertips; her nails were bitten to a bloody pulp. "All you need to make your girlfriend here happy, Blunderpuss, is twenty-five thousand dollars," Spinelli said. Natalie looked at me and smiled, as if confirming the price.

From the Inter-Continental, we drove to Spinelli's place, past the American Embassy, a large building surrounded by a tall wall. Bored guards smoked behind the iron-grille gate. On top of the Embassy there was a nest of sky-begging antennas. I imagined a life of espionage and danger; I imagined the letters I would send to Azra from behind enemy lines. They would be signed with a false name, but she would recognize my handwriting: *When you get this letter, my dear, I will be far beyond the reach of your love.* "This is where I defend freedom so I can pursue happiness," Spinelli said. "One day I'll take you there, Blunderpuss."

As we climbed the stairs of our building, I passed the apartment where my family was likely having dinner, but it felt as though they were not there, as though our place were empty. The absence could have been frightening, but I was too excited to care.

Spinelli went straight to his magnetophone and turned it on. The reels started revolving slowly, disinterestedly. "Ladies and gentlemen, 'Immigrant Song'!" he hollered and then howled along with the music: "*Aaaa Aaaa Aaaaaaa Aaaa Aaaaaa!*"

I put my hands over my ears to signal my suffering, and Natalie laughed. Still screaming, Spinelli rummaged through the debris on his coffee table until he found what I believed was a joint of marijuana. He interrupted his howl to light it up, suck on it briskly, and pass it on to Natalie. I was innocent in the ways of drugs, but when Natalie, holding her breath so that her eyes were bulging and somehow bluer for that, offered it to me, I took it and inhaled as much as I could. Naturally, I coughed it all out immediately, saliva and phlegm erupting from me. Her laughter was snorty, pushing her cheek apples up, dilating her nostrils. A chenille of snot hung from my nose, nearly reaching my chin. "If you can't stand the heat, Blunderpuss," Spinelli whinnied, "stay out of the oven." Well, I was enjoying the oven and once the cough subsided I sipped the smoke from the joint and kept it in my lungs, waiting for the high to arrive.

Spinelli sat at his drum set and grabbed the sticks. He listened intently to a different song now, waiting, biting his lips to express passion. "The greatest goddam bridge in the history of rock and roll," he said, and attacked the timpani. I recognized the beat: it was what had frightened us on our first night in Kinshasa.

"What's the name of that song?" I asked.

" 'Stairway to Heaven,' " Spinelli said.

"It sounds so African."

"That ain't African. That's Bonzo, white as they come."

Natalie took the joint from my hand; her fingers were soft and cold, her touch eerily gentle. I leaned back and stared at the fan revolving frenziedly, as though a helicopter were buried upside down in the ceiling. Spinelli stopped drumming to take a puff.

"See," he said, exhaling, "you're just an innocent kid, Blunderpuss. When I was your age, I did things I wouldn't do now, but I did them then, so I don't have to do them now."

He was rewinding the tape, pressing the "stop" and the "play" buttons alternately, trying to find the beginning of the song.

"There's so much you don't know, son. You have no idea how much you don't know. Before you know anything, you have to know what you don't know."

"I know."

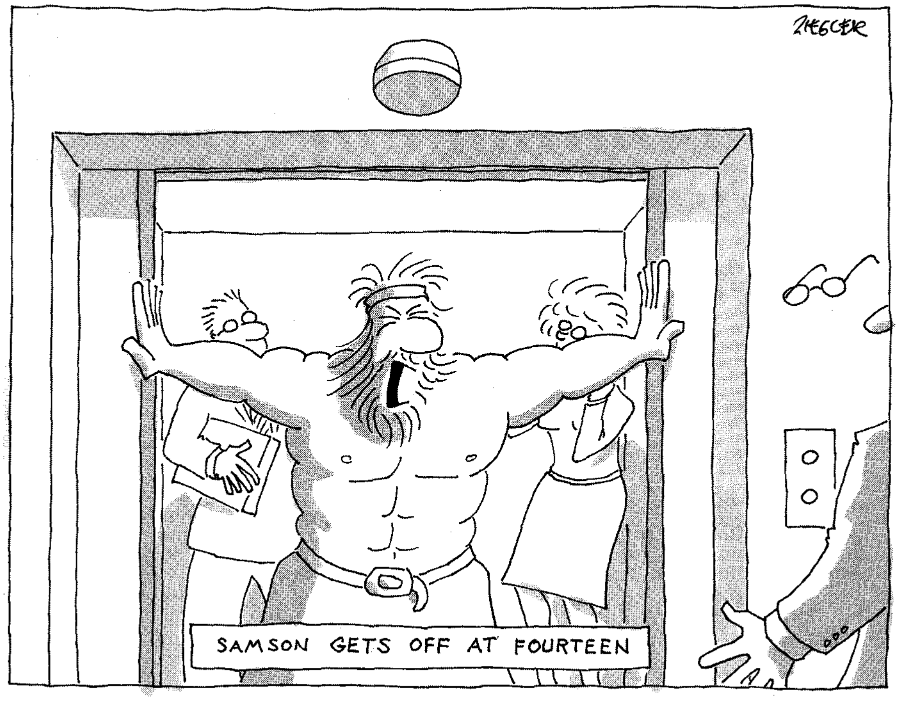
"The fuck you do."

"Leave him alone," Natalie said, dreamily.

"Shut up, Monkeypie." He took another puff, spat on the minuscule butt, and flicked it toward the ashtray on the coffee table, missing by a yard. Then he asked me, "Why are you here?"

"Here? In Kinshasa?"

"Forget Kinshasa, Blunderpuss. Why are you here on this goddam planet? Do you know?"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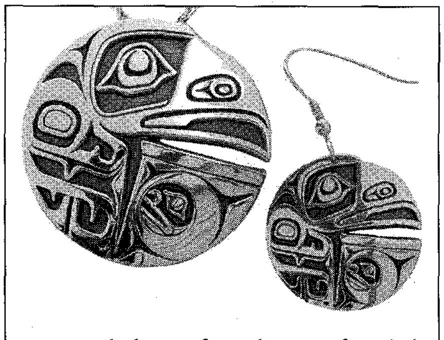

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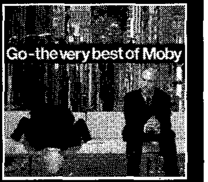
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"No," I had to admit. "I don't."

Natalie sighed, as though she knew where it was all heading.

"Exactly," Spinelli said. "That's exactly your problem."

"Are you O.K., sweetheart?" Natalie asked me, extending her hand, but she couldn't reach me and I couldn't move.

"I feel nothing," I said.

"Stairway to Heaven" was picking up, the drums kicking in. "That's the way!" Spinelli leaped in excitement. "There is always a tunnel at the end of the light."

By this time he was leaning over me, blocking my view of the ceiling fan.

"Steve," Natalie said without conviction. "Leave him alone."

"He is alone," Spinelli said. "We live as we dream. Fucking alone."

"That's Conrad," I said.

"What's that?"

"That's Joseph Conrad."

"No, no, no, no, no, sir. That ain't no Joe Conrad. That's the truth."

He played the "Stairway to Heaven" bridge over my head, closing his eyes, curling his lower lip. Natalie slipped her hand under her cheek and closed her eyes, producing a celestial smile. He dropped down next to me, his back to Natalie's stomach.

"There's a tribe here," he went on, his voice lowered, "that believes that the first man and woman slid down from the sky on a rope. God let them down on a rope, they untied themselves, and the boss pulled the rope up. And that's exactly what happened, my friend. We were dropped down here and we wanna go back up, but there's no rope. So here you are, Blunderpuss, and the rope is gone."

He spread his arms to point at our surroundings: the coffee table with its pile of formerly glossy *National Geographics;* an overflowing ashtray and a bottle of J&B; ebony sculptures of stolid elephants and twiggy warriors, one of them draped in a T-shirt.

"But we can at least try to get up as high as possible," he said, and he excavated a tinfoil nugget from his pocket, unwrapped it with delectation, and showed me a lump of green paste at its heart. "That's why God gave us Afghanistan."

The day I smoked pot for the first time was the day I smoked hashish for the first time. He chipped slivers off the lump, then stuffed it down the narrow bowl of a clay pipe, murmuring to himself, "Yessiree bob!" This time I had no trouble inhaling and releasing the smoke impressively slowly.

"I'm here," Natalie said, and I passed the pipe to her. She smoked on her back, her eyes still closed. The smoke crawled out of her mouth, as though she were not breathing at all.

"See, I was much like you when I was a kid," Spinelli said. "And here I am now."

My head and stomach were completely empty. I tried to inhale air to fill up the vacuum inside me, but it didn't work. I was gasping, as though rapidly deflating, and it sounded like a giggle—I heard myself as someone else.

"You might wanna munch on a banana or something," Spinelli said. "You're pale as shit." Abruptly he stood up and charged off to the kitchen. Natalie's face was ashen, her lips pink; a single hair stretched from her forehead to her mouth. Before I could make any decision, I leaned toward her, planting a kiss where the hair touched her lip. She opened her eyes and widened her smile until I could see the tip of her tongue protruding between her teeth.

I retreated into my throne of stupor just as Spinelli came back with a huge, blazingly yellow banana. He offered it to me and said, "Would the monkey like a banana?"

The monkey ate the banana, promptly passed out, and dreamed of two women, one fat, one slim, knitting black wool to the rhythm of drums, chanting angrily, "Spinelli! Spinelli! Spinelli!" Whereupon I woke up to see Tata in his pith helmet and flannel pajamas shaking an enraged, ruddy finger in Spinelli's face. Spinelli had his hands on his hips and they slowly curled into fists; he was about to punch my father. Natalie sat up and said, "Steve, let it go. Let Bogdan take the boy home." The hair on the right side of her head was bunched up in the shape of a harp, or half a heart.

"All right, man, I apologize. We were just partying a little," Spinelli said. "Hopefully, it's all bridge under the water."

Walking downstairs was much like crossing an underwater bridge: an invisible stream pushed against my knees; I could not feel the solid concrete under my feet. Tata practically carried me, his hands grasping my flesh sternly. He was talking to me, but I could hear only the tone of his voice: angry, quivering. Downstairs, Mama and Sestra sat on the couch like a two-member jury; Sestra watched me with slumberous amusement; Mama's face was awash with tears. For some reason, it was all funny to me, and, when Tata dropped me into the armchair across from them, I slid down to the floor and convulsed with laughter.

Later on, in the middle of the night, I tottered to the kitchen, found the trash bin in the darkness, pressed the pedal to open the lid, and pissed a thick, pleasurable stream into its mouth.

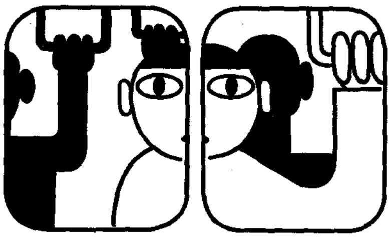
There was no talk given by my parents, no warning about drugs and alcohol, no lecture about self-respect, no complaint about having to clean up the piss lake on the kitchen floor. They just stared at me, mute, across the dinner table: Tata pursed his lips, contemplating the troubling question of my future; Mama pressed her hand against her cheek, shaking her head in disbelief at her extraordinary bad luck in having had such a son.

I was forced to go everywhere they went: to the Lolo La Crevette, where we devoured shrimp with a malarial Macedonian prone to delivering unhurried reports on his talkative cockatoo; to the Portuguese club, where I watched two decrepit Frenchmen play tennis, a skinny boy fetching their scattershot balls; to the Belgian supermarket, pristinely overlit, where everyone was immaculately white, as though the place had been magically transported from the pallid heart of Brussels. I carried "Heart of Darkness" around and tried to read it when no one was talking to me, which was far from often enough. All I wanted was to be alone.

I was alone only when I smoked on my balcony in the tarrish heat, hoping to catch sight of Spinelli or Natalie on the street, but I never did. There was no shuffling of feet upstairs, no slamming of doors, no drumming or hollering along to Led Zeppelin. When I thought of our time together, I could not recall our doing anything or being anywhere. All I could recollect was the sound of Spinelli's voice reciting his adventures: Spinelli going up the Congo with a crew of mercenaries, looking for a fallen Soviet satellite; Spinelli in Angola, submerged in a shallow river, like a hippo, invisible to a Cuban patrol; Spinelli in a Durban restaurant, spooning raw monkey brain out of a cut-open skull.

One Sunday, we went to the Czech Ambassador's garden party in Gombe. There was beer and champagne, *marakuja* juice and punch; there were piles of niblets and fruit, offered on vast trays by a couple of humble servants; there were the blond twin daughters of the Romanian Ambassador; there was our Excellency and his wife, and a lot of wily Communist kids scurrying around and taunting an angry chimpanzee in a cage by the garden shed. I wanted to find a quiet spot to read, but Tata compelled me to join a volleyball game. We were on the same team as the Romanian twins, and a squat Bulgarian whose many gold chains rattled every time he missed the ball. Fortunately, there was also a Russian named Anton, tall and lanky, potato-nosed, gray-eyed. He was by far our best player and handily destroyed the other team. He showed me how to make my fingers flexible so that the ball would float high enough for Tata to smack it into the Ambassador's excellently flabby flesh.

Anton was the only man who did not smoke or drink after the game; he knew how to stay in control. I followed him and Tata to a table under an enormous umbrella; they spoke Russian together, and Anton's voice was deep and curt, used to giving orders. He tapped on the table with an agitated finger and Tata threw up his arms; I thought I heard him say Spinelli's name. When I turned around, I saw Natalie walking barefoot toward me in a diaphanous white dress, and a flare of hope went off in my chest, but it was just one of the Romanian twins, guzzling beer out of a large mug, two streaks curving from the corners of her mouth toward her bepimpled chin.



Soon thereafter we went east for the promised safari. A man was waiting for us on the tarmac of the Goma airport; we saw him as soon as we stepped out of the plane. He wore dark shades, a white shirt, and a black tie; he walked up to Tata and shook his hand diplomatically, as though welcoming a dignitary. His name was Carlier; he assured us that he was at our service and kissed Mama's hand as she was trying to extract it from his grip. He stroked Sestra's hair and nodded at me, as if he thought I was tough and he respected it.

Carlier was slurring his words and I could not tell whether it was his accent or whether he was drunk. Except for his shades and a large diamond ring on his middle finger, he resembled a butcher in a poor neighborhood: he had a heavy, fat-rounded head, large ears with meaty earlobes, blood speckles on his mercilessly scraped face. He bribed our way through the ovenlike airport, extending his money-stuffed hand to uniformed officers. Outside, he chased away a swarm of cabbies and crap-hawkers and led us to a van next to which a man stood at attention in a suit with a tightly knotted tie. Carlier barked at him and he leaped to open the door for us.

The streets of Goma were enveloped in roiling clouds of black dust. In an uncanny moment, I realized that everyone in sight was barefoot and, for a moment, I could not remember what the purpose of shoes was. But then I saw booted policemen standing on the porches, leaning on walls, like idle villains in Westerns, and the world of straightforward facts was restored. When we stopped to let a skittish herd of goats pass, nobody approached the van to offer us carved human bones or knitting needles.

"You make a right turn here," Carlier said, "and you are in Rwanda."

We turned left, got out of town, and drove through the fields of black lava rock surrounding intermittent islands of jungle verdure. A gray mountain beyond the green-and-black landscape exuded smoke; the earth seemed unearthly. "Nyiragongo," Carlier said, as if the word were self-explanatory.

The Karibu Hotel consisted of huts

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scattered along the shore of Lake Kivu, which, Carlier told us gleefully, contained no life: the last time Nyiragongo had erupted, the volcanic gases had killed every living creature in it. Sestra and I shared one of the huts, which was redolent of clean towels, insecticide, and mold. As she unpacked, humming to herself, I stared out the window: a pirogue glided unhurriedly on the waveless water; the sky and the lake were welded together seamlessly; a pale moon levitated in the haze. The sun was setting somewhere; it seemed as if everything were returning to darkness after an unhappy day out.

The ban on my wandering seemed to be suspended here; I left Sestra sprawling on her bed, happily attached to her Walkman. "Heart of Darkness" in hand, I took an uphill path past the other bungalows. I was hoping to escape dinner with my family. On the way from the airport, they had felt as foreign to me as if they were hired actors mindlessly performing gestures of care and kinship: Tata in his absurd pith helmet, Mama smirking, routinely afraid of the future, Sestra approaching everything with pointless curiosity. I could remember that I used to love them, but I could not remember why, and I was terrified.

The carefully trimmed hedges were moist with dusk; low, mushroomlike lanterns flickered along the path. I walked onto a terrace extending from a vast dining hall. At its center, like an altar, was a table laden with food and flowers. And there, with his back to me, picking up slices of meat and chunks of fruit, mounding them on his plate, was Steve Spinelli. I recognized his triangular torso and narrow hips, his clawlike curls and cowboy boots. For a blink, I considered sneaking out, but then he turned—a veritable hillock of victuals on his plate—and looked at me with no surprise whatsoever.

"Look what the bitch dragged in," he said.

He walked out onto the terrace and I went with him to his table; he offered me a seat and I took it, determined to leave before Tata caught me there. Without being asked, I said, "We are going to the Virunga National Park tomorrow, for a safari."

"It's a fun world, Blunderpuss," Spinelli said. "Getting funner every day."

"Is Natalie with you?"

"She is."

"Why are you here?"

He chewed heartily, with his mouth open, ignoring me. Between forkfuls, he puffed on a cigarette.

"For a vacation," he said. "And, who knows, there might be some business to be done."

I grabbed his Marlboros and lit up. The possibility that the cigarette might be drug-laced crossed my mind, but it tasted good. He seemed to speak to me from a space in which no life mattered—all the roles had already been assigned and I did not know what mine was. I fidgeted and tapped the ashes off my cigarette until the ember broke off.

"I hear that you're a good volleyball player," he said. "Did you like Antonyka?"

"How do you know him?"

"I know a lot of people. Anton is a remarkable gentleman, as well as a Communist cocksucker."

He waved at Carlier, who was just walking into the dining hall, accompanied by a tall man with sideburns and a scaphander-like Afro. Carlier spoke to the man brusquely, pointing at the meat tray, then at the flowers—there was some disorder to be redressed. "I know Carlier, too, for example," Spinelli went on. "We used to run guns to Angola together." The man took notes, looking at Carlier with dismay that tightened the muscles and sinews in his forearms. I envisioned him suddenly punching Carlier's face in, blood spraying onto his white shirt.

"Your dad also played with you and Anton, didn't he?" Spinelli said. "I bet you played pretty good together."

Carlier dropped into the chair next to Spinelli. He pulled a pipe out of his breast pocket and picked some detritus from its mouth with his pinkie, but didn't light it.

"Whipping would be too good for Monsieur Henry," he said peevishly.

"One day, Carlier, he's gonna slit your throat," Spinelli said. "And I'll cry over your corpse till I can piss no more."

Scoffing with approbation, Carlier picked up my book, looked at it without interest, and put it down. I took it and bid them good night.

The mushroom lamps cast a feeble light on the path, but not on anything else. The lava gravel crunched under my feet. Obscure creatures rustled in the black trees and bushes. The sky was splattered with stars, smeared with the Milky Way. I was lost; I could not remember the number of my hut, which was identical to all the others; the path seemed to go in circles.

I don't know why I behaved like a lunatic. I heard footsteps coming down the path behind me; I stepped off into the darkness and ducked behind a tree, with a precise clarity of action, as though somebody had already done it once and I was just repeating his motions. Whatever was in the tree shuffled its way up; I dropped my book. The footsteps stopped.

"Come out, Blunderpuss. I can see you."

I was afraid to move or look at him, exhaling until I was out of air, then inhaling through my nostrils, getting lightheaded and elated, as though that were the way to make myself invisible. Something fell on my head from above—a leaf, an insect, monkey hair—but I did not brush it off. It was so easy here to forget everything, to lose all bearing. I stepped out onto the path.

"Let's go and say hi to Monkeypie," Spinelli said. "She'd love to see you."

"Maybe later," I said. "I must go."

"She's crazy about you, you know. She talks about you all the time. She'd love to see you." He put his arm around my shoulders; I felt the weight of his forearm on my neck as he softly pushed me forward.

Their room smelled of burned sugar; the ceiling fan was dead. Natalie lay on her side, her hand tucked between the pillow and her cheek, her tranquil face lit by the bedside lamp. Around her biceps a loose rubber rope twisted. On the nightstand there was a syringe and a spoon and a lit candle. I was an instant behind myself: I saw what it all was, but the thought could not encrust itself with meaning. Spinelli caressed her forehead with the back of his hand and moved a stray hair from her cheek.

"She is beautiful, isn't she, so peaceful," he said. "Would you like to fuck her?"

"I don't know," I said. "I don't think so."

"She's a little out of touch, but she'd love it, believe me."

"No, thank you."

"What's your problem, Blunderpuss? When I was your age, I had a hard-on twenty-four/seven."

He stood above her with his hands on his hips. I couldn't move, until my knees got so weak I sat down next to Natalie, my back to her; she did not flinch when I leaned on her belly. I had reached the farthest point of navigation. *Dear Azra, The leaves have covered my path. I do not know if I will ever see you again.*

"You can't get it up, can you?" he said, chortling. "You can't get it up. Let me show you something." He quickly unfastened his eagle-buckled belt and let his jeans drop. His dick stood in my face like an erected cannon. Its head was perfectly purple; the blue veins seemed to be throbbing.

"A solid torpedo and ready to explode," Spinelli said and stroked it. "Do you wanna touch it? C'mon, touch it."

Natalie sighed but did not open her eyes; the candle flickered, nearly going out. With indescribable effort, I finally stood up and pushed him away. "Hey!" he said, stumbling backward with his pants at his ankles. Still, I expected him to grab me from behind. I was ready for him to smash my head against the door until I blacked out, but nothing happened.

Outside, a tremulous wake of light stretched itself toward the cataractous moon. My heart was playing the bridge from "Stairway to Heaven," but beyond the noise in my veins, beyond my limp limbs, beyond my clammy skin, there was a serene flow carrying me away from everything that had been me. Up the path, past an oddly azure pool with a school of insects drowning in it, I walked back toward the dining hall.

At the dining hall there would be my family: Sestra picking the green beans off Tata's plate; Tata slicing his steak, still wearing his pith helmet; and Mama separating the mashed potatoes from the carrots on Sestra's plate, because Sestra never wanted her foods to touch. I would take my place at the table, and Tata would ask me where I had been. "Nowhere," I would say, and he would ask me nothing more. "You'd better eat something—you look so pale," Mama would say. My sister would tell us how much she was looking forward to the safari, to seeing the elephants and the antelopes and the monkeys. "Tomorrow is going to be really great," she would cry, clapping her hands with joy. "I simply can't wait." And we would laugh, Mama, Tata, and I, we would laugh, Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha, desperately hiding our rope burns. ♦

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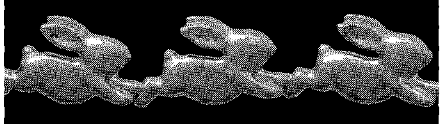

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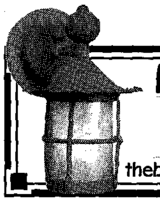

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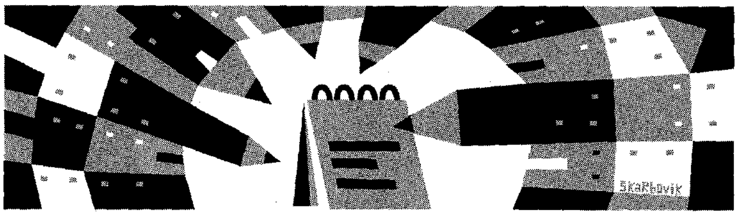


BOOKS

THE NUTTY PROFESSORS

The history of academic charisma.

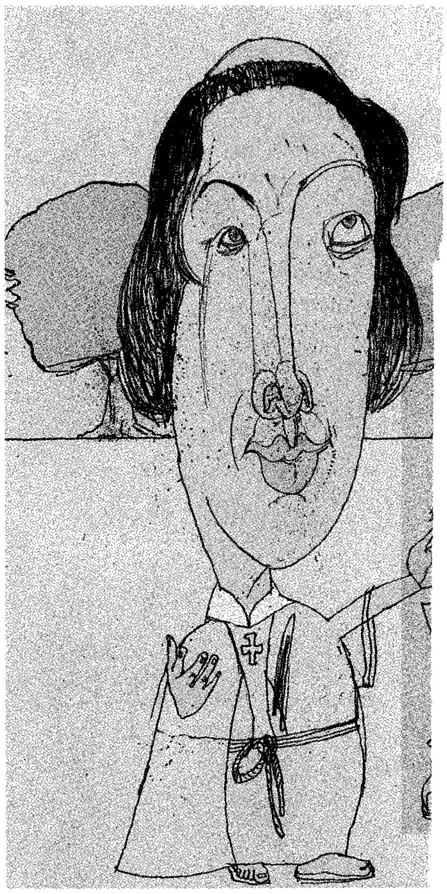
BY ANTHONY GRAFTON

Anyone who has ever taught at a college or university must have had this experience. You're in the middle of something that you do every day: standing at a lectern in a dusty room, for example, lecturing to a roomful of teen-agers above whom hang almost visible clouds of hormones; or running a seminar, hoping to find the question that will make people talk even though it's spring and no one has done the reading; or sitting in a department meeting as your colleagues act out their various professional identities, the Russian historians spreading gloom, the Germanists accidentally taking Poland, the Asianists grumbling about Western ignorance and lack of civility, and the Americanists expressing surprise at the idea that the world has other continents. Suddenly, you find yourself wondering, like Kingsley Amis's Lucky Jim, how you can possibly be doing this. Why, in the age of the World Wide Web, do professors still stand at podiums and blather for fifty minutes at unruly mobs of students, their lowered baseball caps imperfectly concealing the sleep buds that rim their eyes? Why do professors and students put on polyester gowns and funny hats and march, once a year, in the uncertain glory of the late spring? Why, when most of our graduate students are going to work as teachers, do we make them spend years grinding out massive, specialized dissertations, which, when revised and published, may reach a readership that numbers in the high two figures? These activities seem both bizarre and disconnected, from one another and from modern life, and it's no wonder that they often provoke irritation, not only in professional pundits but also in parents, potential donors, and academic administrators.

Not that long ago, universities played a very different role in the public imagination, and top academics seemed to glitter as they walked. At a Berlin banquet in 1892, Mark Twain, himself a worldwide celebrity, stared in amazement as a crowd of a thousand young students "rose and shouted and stamped and clapped, and banged the beer-mugs" when the historian Theodor Mommsen entered the room:

> This was one of those immense surprises that can happen only a few times in one's life. I was not dreaming of him; he was to me only a giant myth, a world-shadowing specter, not a reality. The surprise of it all can be only comparable to a man's suddenly coming upon Mont Blanc, with its awful form towering into the sky, when he didn't suspect he was in its neighborhood. I would have walked a great many miles to get a sight of him, and here he was, without trouble, or tramp, or cost of any kind. Here he was, clothed in a titanic deceptive modesty which made him look like other men. Here he was, carrying the Roman world and all the Caesars in his hospitable skull, and doing it as easily as that other luminous vault, the skull of the universe, carries the Milky Way and the constellations.

Mommsen's fantastic energy and work ethic—he published more than fifteen hundred scholarly works—had made him a hero, not only among scholars but to the general public, a figure without real parallels today. The first three volumes of his "History of Rome," published in the eighteen-fifties, were best-sellers for decades and won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1902. Berlin tram conductors pointed him out as he stood in the street, leaning against a lamppost and reading: "That is the celebrated Professor Mommsen: *he loses no time*." Mommsen was as passionately engaged with the noisy, industrializing present as with the ancient past. As a liberal member of the Prussian legislature, he fought racism, nationalism, and imperialism, and clashed with Bismarck. Yet Mommsen knew how to coöperate with the government on the things that really mattered. He favored reorganizing research in the humanities along the autocratic, entrepreneurial lines of the big businesses of his time—companies like Siemens and Zeiss, whose scientific work was establishing Germany as the leading industrial power in Europe. This approach essentially gave rise to the research team, a group of scholars headed by a distinguished figure which receives funding to achieve a particular goal. Mommsen's view was that "large-scale scholarship—not pursued, but directed, by a single man—is a necessary element in our cultural evolution." He won public support for such enterprises as a vast

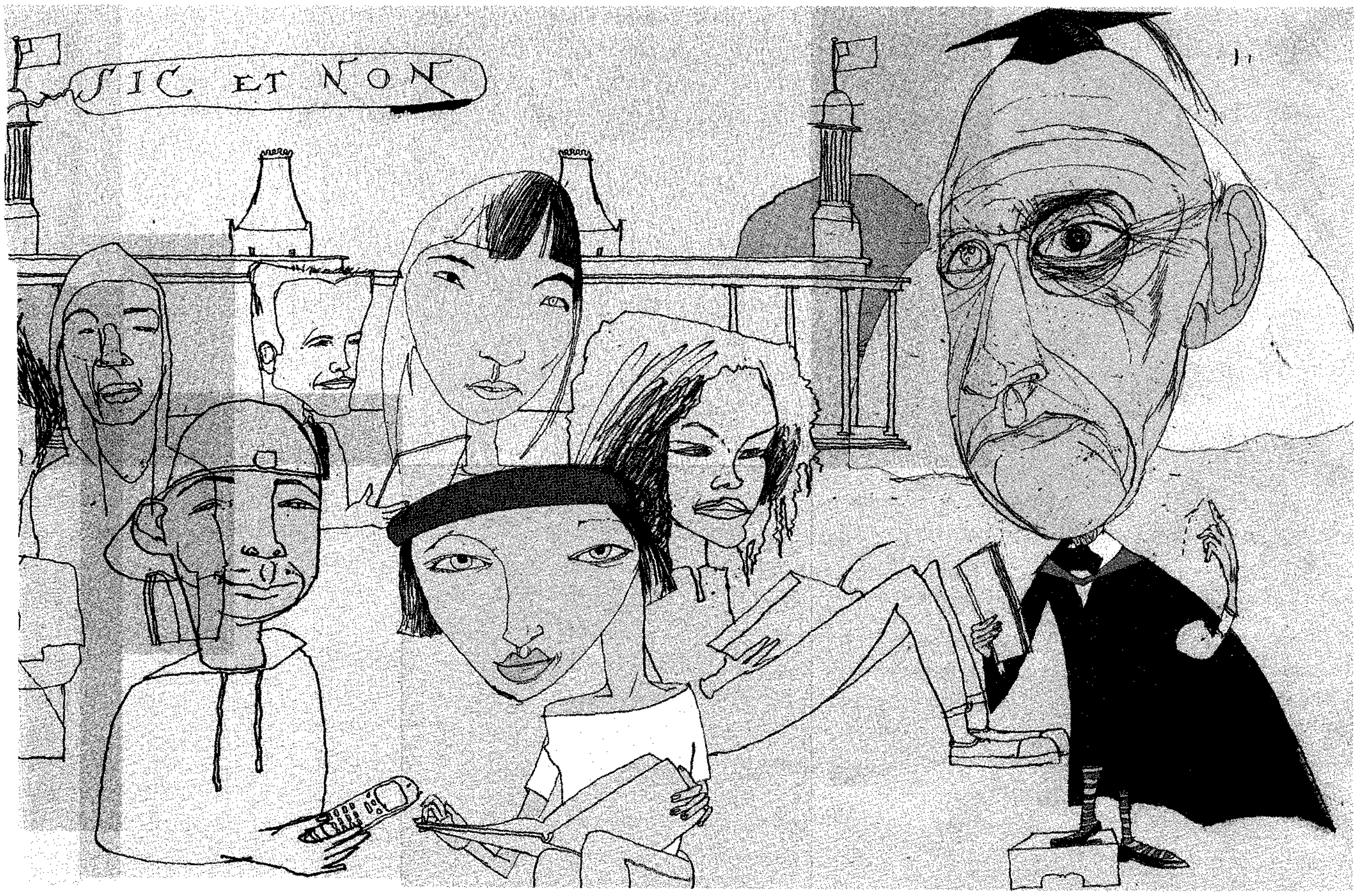


Universities have always had a dual role, collection, still being amassed, of the tens of thousands of inscriptions that show, more vividly than any work of literature, what Roman life was like. He also advised the Prussian government on academic appointments, and helped make the University of Berlin and the Prussian Academy of Sciences the widely envied scientific center of the West—the Harvard, you might say, of the nineteenth century.

The model that Mommsen represented was revered and imitated around the world. In the United States, the new universities founded after the Civil War—Clark, Johns Hopkins, and Chicago—set out to gain prominence as Berlin had: by becoming research institutions and competing to attract faculty stars. In 1892, the University of Chicago, then two years old, wooed the historian Hermann von Holst away from Freiburg by promising him more than five times his previous salary. New labs and libraries popped up in cities and college towns across the country—at least until the Depression and the Second World War created other priorities. The age of academic prosperity that has lasted, with interruptions, from the nineteen-eighties to the present, and that has inspired campus novels and provoked skirmishes in the culture wars, has arguably been little more than an ironic replay of that late-nineteenth-century zenith, with academic stars fighting as hard for their own preferment as Mommsen did for the young and gifted.

But what does the academic agenda of the modern research-based university have to do with the other side of college life as we know it—with fraternity pledges, the choruses of "Gaudeamus igitur," the stone façades of Victorian Gothic buildings? The mixed inheritance of the modern university is the subject of a new book with the somewhat oxymoronic title "Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University," by William Clark, a historian who has spent his academic career at both American and European universities. Clark thinks that the modern university, with its passion for research, prominent professors, and, yes, black crêpe, took shape in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And he makes his case with analytic shrewdness, an exuberant love of archival anecdote, and a wry sense of humor. It's hard to resist a writer who begins by noting, "Befitting the subject, this is an odd book."

Clark's story starts in the Middle Ages. The organizations that became the first Western universities, schools that sprang up in Paris and Bologna, were in part an outgrowth of ecclesiastical institutions, and their teachers asserted their authority by sitting, like bishops, in thrones—which is why we still refer to professorships as chairs—and speaking in a prescribed way, about approved texts. "The lecture, like the sermon, had a liturgical cast and aura," Clark writes. "One must be authorized to perform the rite, and must do it in an authorized manner. Only then does the chair convey genuine charisma to the lecturer." Clark assumes his notion of charisma, loosely but clearly, from the work of Max Weber, who developed the idea that authority assumes three forms. Traditional authority, the stable possession of kings and priests, rested on custom, "piety for what actually, allegedly or presumably has always existed." Charismatic authority, wild and



DAVID HUGHES

s for intellectual superstars—like Abelard (left) and Theodor Mommsen (right)—but also producing reliable annual crops of graduates.

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disruptive, derived from "the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person." Rational authority, the last of the three forms to emerge, represented the rise of bureaucratic procedure, dividing responsibilities and following precise rules.

As Weber pointed out, in real organizations these different forms of authority interact and collide. In the medieval classroom, for all its emphasis on tradition-bound hierarchy and order, a contrary force came into play, one that unleashed the charisma of talented individuals: the disputation, in which a respondent affirmed the thesis under discussion and an opponent attempted to refute it. (Unlike the lecture, the disputation hasn't survived as an institution, but its modern legacy includes the oral defenses that Ph.D. candidates make of their theses, and the format of our legal trials.) Clark calls the disputation a "theater of warfare, combat, trial and joust," and, indeed, early proponents likened it to the contests of athletic champions in ancient Rome.

One early academic champion was the Parisian master Abelard, who cunningly used the format of the disputation to point up the apparent inconsistencies in orthodox Christian doctrine. He lined up the discordant opinions of the Fathers of the Church under the deliberately provocative title "Sic et Non" ("Yes and No") and invited all comers to debate how the conflicts might be resolved. His triumphs in these "combats" made him, arguably, the first glamorous Parisian intellectual. A female disciple, Héloïse, wrote to him, "Every wife, every young girl desired you in absence and was on fire in your presence." Their story has become a legend because of what followed: Héloïse, unwed, had a child by Abelard, her kin castrated him in revenge, and they both lived out their lives, for the most part, in cloisters. But even after Abelard's writings were condemned and burned, pupils came from across Europe hoping to study with him. He had the enduring magnetism of the hotshot who can outargue anyone in the room.

Traditionalist plodders and charismatic firebrands shared the university from the beginning. The heart of Clark's story, however, takes place not during the Middle Ages but from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment, and not in France but in the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire. This complex assembly of tiny territorial states and half-timbered towns had no capital to rival Paris, but the little clockwork polities transformed the university through the simple mechanism of competition. German officials understood that a university could make a profit by attaining international stature. Every well-off native who stayed home to study and every foreign noble who came from abroad with his tutor—as Shakespeare's Hamlet left Denmark to study in Saxon Wittenberg—meant more income. And the way to attract customers was to modernize and rationalize what professors and students did.

These German polities called themselves "police states"—not in the sense of being oppressive but, as Clark explains, in the sense that they tried "to achieve the good policing, *die gute Policey*, of the land by monitoring and regulating the behavior of subjects by paperwork." At first, what *Policey* meant for the universities was just finding out what the professors were up to. Bureaucrats pressured universities to print catalogues of the courses they offered—the early modern ancestor of the bright brochures that spill from the crammed mailboxes of families with teen-age children. Gradually, the bureaucrats devised ways to insure that the academics were fulfilling their obligations. In Vienna, Clark notes, "a 1556 decree provided for paying two individuals to keep daily notes on lecturers and professors"; in Marburg, from 1564 on, the university beadle kept a list of skipped lectures and gave it, quarterly, to the rector, who imposed fines. Others demanded that professors fill in *Professorenzetteln*, slips of paper that gave a record of their teaching activities. Professorial responses to such bureaucratic intrusions seem to have varied as much then as they do now. Clark reproduces two *Professorenzetteln* from 1607 side by side. Michael Mästlin, an astronomer and mathematician who taught Kepler and was an early adopter of the Copernican view of the universe, gives an energetic full-page outline of his teaching. Meanwhile, Andreas Osiander, a theologian whose grandfather had been an important ally of Luther, writes one scornful sentence: "In explicating Luke I have reached chapter nine."

Bureaucracy has its own logic, and officials pushed for results that looked rational: results that they could codify, sort, and explain to their masters. Glacially, the universities responded. The old disputations were discontinued. These had always placed greater emphasis on formal skill in argument than on truth of outcome, and during the Baroque period and the Enlightenment they came to seem sterile and farcical. (Rather like department meetings and creative-writing workshops today, they had begun to inspire biting satires.) Instead, the universities instituted formal examinations—exercises that were carefully graded and recorded by those who administered them. Doctoral candidates had to defend printed dissertations. Clark wonderfully describes these strenuous, scary exercises. When Dorothea Schlözer, the daughter of a professor, underwent her examination for a doctorate at Göttingen in 1787, she confronted a committee of seven examiners. In deference to her sex, she was seated not at the far end of the table, facing the professors, but between two of them. The examination—which was interrupted for tea—allowed for masterly displays of professorial snideness. One professor "pulled a rock out of his pocket and asked her to classify it. After a couple more questions, he said he was going to ask her one on the binomial theorem, but, as he reckoned most of his own colleagues knew nothing of it, he decided to skip it." The student calmly outperformed her masters. When another professor asked about art history, she noted that she had not listed this topic on her résumé, and thus should not be asked about it—but then she answered anyway. After about two hours, a professor who had been silent until then interrupted a colleague to note that "it was 7:30 and time to quit." Schlözer passed.

In an even more radical break with the past, professors began to be appointed on the basis of merit. In many universities, it had been routine for sons to succeed their fathers in chairs, and bright male students might hope to gain access to the privileged university caste by marrying a professor's daughter. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, reformers in Hanover and elsewhere tried to select and promote professors according to the quality of their published work, and an accepted hierarchy of positions emerged. The bureaucrats were upset when a gifted scholar like Immanuel Kant ignored this hierarchy and refused to leave the city of his choice to accept a desirable chair elsewhere. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the pace of transformation reached a climax.

In these years, intellectuals inside and outside the university developed a new myth, one that Clark classes as Romantic. They argued that *Wissenschaft*—systematic, original research unencumbered by superstition or the authority of mere tradition—was the key to all academic achievement. If a university wanted to attract foreign students, it must appoint professors who could engage in such scholarship. At a great university like Göttingen or Berlin, students, too, would do original research, writing their own dissertations instead of paying the professors to do so, as their fathers probably had. Governments sought out famous professors and offered them high salaries and research funds, and stipends for their students. The fixation on *Wissenschaft* placed the long-standing competition among universities on an idealistic footing.

Between 1750 and 1825, the research enterprise established itself, along with institutions that now seem eternal and indispensable: the university library, with its acquisitions budget, large building, and elaborate catalogues; the laboratory; the academic department, with its fellowships and specialized training. So did a new form of teaching: the seminar, in which students learned by doing, presenting reports on their original research for the criticism of their teachers and colleagues. The new pedagogy prized novelty and discovery; it was stimulating, optimistic, and attractive to students around the world. Some ten thousand young Americans managed to study in Germany during the nineteenth century. There, they learned that research defined the university enterprise. And that is why we still make our graduate students write dissertations and our assistant professors write books. The multicultural, global faculty of the American university still inhabits the all-male, and virtually all-Christian, research universities of Mommsen's day.

Clark leads the reader through these transformations, year by year and document by document. He also uses the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge as a traditionalist foil to the innovations of Germany. Well into the nineteenth century, these were the only two universities in England, and dons—who were not allowed to marry—lived side by side with undergraduates, in an environment that had about it more of the monastery than of modernity. The tutorial method, too, had changed little, and colleges were concerned less with producing great scholars than with cultivating a serviceable crop of civil servants, barristers, and clergymen. The eighteenth century, which saw the flowering of modern German academe, marked a nadir recorded by Edward Gibbon, the Magdalen College dropout who became the greatest historian of imperial Rome, in memorable (and slightly exaggerated) terms:

> The fellows or monks of my time were decent easy men, who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder. Their days were filled by a series of uniform employments; the chapel and the hall, the coffee-house and the common room, till they retired, weary and well-satisfied, to a long slumber. From the toil of reading or thinking or writing they had absolved their conscience, and the first shoots of learning and ingenuity withered on the ground.

Yet, even at Oxford, some scientists and scholars offered innovative lecture courses, and, conversely, the innovative German universities did not abandon all the old ways of doing things. Professors continued to give lectures as well as to hold seminars. Academic ceremonies continued to take place, and continued to do a great deal for the reputations of universities—especially once the giving of honorary degrees began to attract the attention of newspapers. Invented traditions, moreover, proved as attractive as ancient ones—particularly at universities that drew young men of high birth and others with social pretensions. Nineteenth-century German students were even more dedicated to duelling with sabres and attending formal banquets (such as the one at which Twain saw Mommsen) than they were to original research. Twain himself was as charmed by the picturesque duelling corps and taverns of Heidelberg as he was by the avatars of modern *Wissenschaft* in Berlin.

Similarly, although the hiring of professors became more meritocratic, administrators faced the enduring problem of how to assess merit systematically. Clark demonstrates this by inviting us to accompany Friedrich Gedike, a Prussian minister, on the visits he made to fourteen universities in June and July, 1789, just as the

French Revolution was breaking out. Where his sixteenth- and seventeenth-century predecessors would have asked about the character and teaching abilities of local professors—did they have an audience, were they punctual, were they too friendly with the students?—Gedike undertook a ruthless talent search in an academic world where states competed for researchers. At the University of Göttingen, for instance, a hub of innovation only half a century old, he found an interesting anomaly. Professors tended to remain frozen at their acquisition salaries unless they could extract more money with the leverage of an outside offer. And, because universities mostly wanted to hire professors whose greatest works were still ahead of them, junior professors were often paid more than senior ones. Hence, academics at Göttingen found the whole subject of salaries too embarrassing to discuss, and Gedike had to collect information from "sensible and well-informed students, rather than professors."

Gedike asked sharp, precise questions, but his judgments were, necessarily, reliant on the words of the specialists he spoke to. His report offered a long and precise evaluation of Christian Gottlob Heyne, the classicist who had done more than any other professor to make Göttingen a world-class center of learning. But often he could do little more than offer character assessments—"timid," "hypochondriac," "very sinister and misanthropic"—of the eccentrics who dominated the various faculties. In essence, Gedike and his colleagues gathered academic gossip and passed it on. The opinions were compiled, the decisions were made, and the jobs were handed out, not solely on the basis of rational, informed scrutiny of candidates' merits but also on the basis of what people who might know something had to say about who was hot and who was not. These procedures are all too familiar to anyone who has taken part in academic hiring decisions today. A committee sits in a room, discussing folders full of organized gossip—and, nowadays, densely technical reports—about professors at other universities. Then it does its best to decide which of them to hire and what it will take to attract them—even though no one in the room may be competent to sum up, much less assess, the work of the candidates in question. We apply our best hermeneutics to the C.V. and letters of recommendation, discount known feuds, add points for this and that—and then, somehow, arrive at a decision.

As Clark shows, the assessment of professors is only one incidence of a much larger phenomenon. Universities are strange and discordant places because they are palimpsests of the ancient and the modern. Their history follows a Weberian narrative of rationalization, but it also reveals the limits of that rationalization. Mommsen, for all his modernity, spoke and wrote elegant, lucid Latin, like the humanists of the Renaissance, and enjoyed traditional academic ceremonies. Modern universities sincerely try to find the best scholars and scientists, those who work on the cutting edge of their fields, but they are also keen to preserve the traditional aspects of their culture and like their professors to wear their gowns with an air. They hope that some undefined combination of these qualities will attract the best crop of seventeen-year-olds available.

In the end, Clark never fully anatomizes how individual academics—those strange creatures flapping about in their batlike gowns—came to possess inherent charisma, as opposed to the authority conferred on them by chairs, titles, and the other "material practices" that form the core of his study. After all, charisma is to some extent irreducible; in the classroom a scholar can inspire by sheer force of intellect and personality, an effect to which bureaucratic reports seldom do justice. But Clark is shrewd in charting one aspect of academic charisma—namely, the importance of asceticism in creating an aura of greatness. Mommsen, with his heroic self-control and self-abnegation, had many precursors. The roots of academic asceticism surely lie in the university's monastic prehistory. Indeed, Gadi Algazi, an Israeli historian, has shown that although German scholars, unlike their English counterparts, were allowed to marry and set up households from the fifteenth century onward, they took endless pains to show that they demanded big houses only so that they could work uninterrupted and married only so that they could have orderly, well-run homes.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, professorial asceticism moved from the home to the workplace, where it took new forms, most notably that of productivity on an epic, and sometimes eccentric, scale. The new model professor wore himself out: greatness of mind and depth of learning, like beauty, could be attained only through suffering. Christian Gottlob Heyne, who integrated the visual arts into the formal study of antiquity, also ran Göttingen's university library—one of the largest and best organized in Europe—and published reviews of some eight thousand of the books that he obtained and catalogued for the university's collection. Heyne's pupil Friedrich August Wolf became legendary by similar means. As a scholar, his importance rested on his 1795 "Prolegomena to Homer"—an enormously successful book, though only the first volume ever appeared and it was written in Latin—which argued that the Iliad and the Odyssey were collections of originally oral poems, assembled by the poet-scholars of Hellenistic Alexandria. But what really made him a celebrity was his combination of daring and self-denial. Wolf insisted on registering as a student not of theology but of philology, even though the few available jobs for graduates were for ministers rather than scholars. Heyne showed him his desk, piled with letters from schoolteachers "who tell me that they would be glad to be hanged, from actual destitution," but Wolf persevered. He replaced the student's usual pigtail with a wig, so that he would not have to go to the barber; stayed away from the taverns where students caroused and the salons where they met young women; and even stopped attending lectures, since he thought that his time could be more productively spent reading the assigned books. He infuriated his teacher by reading ahead of the class and taking out all the library books that Heyne needed to prepare his lectures. And his reward came soon: a professorship at Halle, at the age of twenty-four. This brilliant, bitter nonconformist paradoxically became a model for later generations of students. No wonder observers praised Mommsen's ceaseless industry so extravagantly half a century later: he was not only doing history at a superb level but also living an ascetic ideal that still mattered.

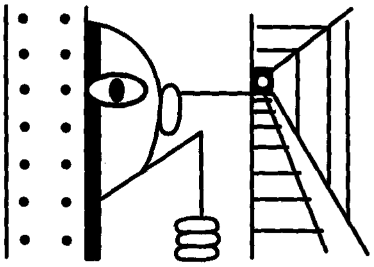
Today, academic charisma—and the ascetic life of scholarship that goes with it—retains a central place in the life of universities. Scholars in all fields continue to gain preferment because they are "productive" (the academic euphemism for obsessive), and students continue to emulate them. Future investment bankers pull all-nighters delving into subjects that they will never need to know about again, and years later, at reunions, they recall the intensity of the experience with something close to disbelief—and, often, passionate nostalgia. The university has never been a sleek, efficient corporation. It's more like the military, an organization at once radically modern and steeped in color and tradition. And it's not at all easy to say how much of the mystique could be stripped away without harming the whole institution. If you thoroughly rationalize charisma, can it remain charismatic?

If Clark helps us to understand why the contemporary university seems such an odd, unstable compound of novelty and conservatism, he also leaves us with some cause for unease. Mommsen may have liked to see himself as a buccaneering capitalist, but his money came from the state. Today, by contrast, dwindling public support has forced university administrators to look for other sources of funding, and to assess professors and programs through the paradigm of the efficient market. Outside backers tend to direct their support toward disciplines that offer practical, salable results—the biological sciences, for instance, and the quantitative social sciences—and universities themselves have an incentive to channel money into work that will generate patents for them. The new regime may be a good way to get results, but it's hard to imagine that this style of management would have found much room for a pair of eccentrics like James Watson and Francis Crick, or for the kind of long-range research that they did. As for the humanities, once the core of the enterprise—well, humanists these days bring in less grant money than Mommsen, and their salaries and working conditions reflect that all too clearly. The inefficient and paradoxical ways of doing things that, for all their peculiarity, have made American universities the envy of the world are changing rapidly. What ironic story will William Clark have to tell a generation from now? ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Breakable You, *by Brian Morton (Harcourt; $25).* This packed novel about the vagaries of love and grief takes place in a New York straight out of Woody Allen: enormous apartments abound, and girls in bars say things like "Paul Auster makes me wet." Adam Weller, an aging, still handsome Jewish novelist, has recently left his wife, a psychologist. She, when not (with justification) trying to smash grapefruit into Adam's face, worries about their daughter, a philosophy grad student who is having a sexually obsessive affair with an Arab-American who, in turn, is mourning the death of his young daughter from a rare blood disease. The forced, almost pedantic quality of Morton's social caricature obscures the fact that he can write ferociously moving prose about the tragedy of a child's illness. Inside his broad comedy of manners is a heartfelt novel about the redemptive power of suffering.

Secondhand World, *by Katherine Min (Knopf; $23).* This disquieting début novel begins like a murder mystery: in a hospital burn unit, a badly scarred eighteen-year-old flatly informs us of her parents' death by fire. The story that follows, however, is less an investigation than an exorcism. As the daughter of Korean immigrants, growing up in the seventies, the narrator is bullied by classmates and barely noticed by her parents. She finds kinship with a "fellow freak," an albino boy, but their love affair soon ends, and she turns her rage against her mother, who she discovers is leading a secret life. Symbolism is the primary force here, occasionally overwhelming the plot. Still, the writing is exquisite and exacting, as when the narrator describes the dregs of whiskey in a glass as her father's "spoor," or recalls her lover's "dazzling Kabuki face."



Moscow 1941, *by Rodric Braithwaite (Knopf; $30).* As German troops approached Moscow in June, 1941, two million people were evacuated from the city, in seventy thousand trainloads, including forty carriages and thirty-five freight cars carrying the sets, staff, and props of the Bolshoi Theatre. But, after a brief spell during which Stalin seemed paralyzed—and despite his habit of having his own generals shot—the Russians turned and attacked. Braithwaite concludes that it was not, as the Germans liked to claim, the Russian winter that undid the Wehrmacht; rather, an unexpectedly strong Soviet counteroffensive delivered Hitler's first major defeat. The cost included almost a million Soviet soldiers dead. Braithwaite, who was Britain's Ambassador to Moscow from 1988 to 1992, interviewed a remarkable range of Muscovites for the book, from students and nurses who joined the fight to a metro worker who dug Stalin's secret bunker, and he has produced a symphonic evocation of a great city at war.

Running for the Hills, *by Horatio Clare (Scribner; $24).* In the early nineteen-seventies, eager to escape from London smog and smitten by sweeping views of Welsh mountains, Clare's parents, both journalists, bought a remote farm in the Brecon Beacons, taking charge of more than a hundred sheep. His father considered it "a privilege and a stewardship for which the price . . . was farming," but that price—the sleepless frenzy of lambing, the horrors of maggot-infested tails, the hopelessness of the financial situation—became greater than he was willing to bear, and he returned to London. Clare's mother, deeply in love with the land and the way of life, was determined to stay. The result for the author was a childhood spent scrambling with his madcap mother to keep her dream (and the sheep) alive, and idolizing his rational father from afar. His account is remarkable for its tender observation of nature: a trip to watch badger cubs playing in the "hot yawns of full summer" is scored by "the curly whispering of the stream," and when the snow begins in winter the mountain grass is "like green fur on the back of a white beast."

THE THEATRE

BLOWING SMOKE

Neil LaBute on the dynamics of self-deception.

BY JOHN LAHR

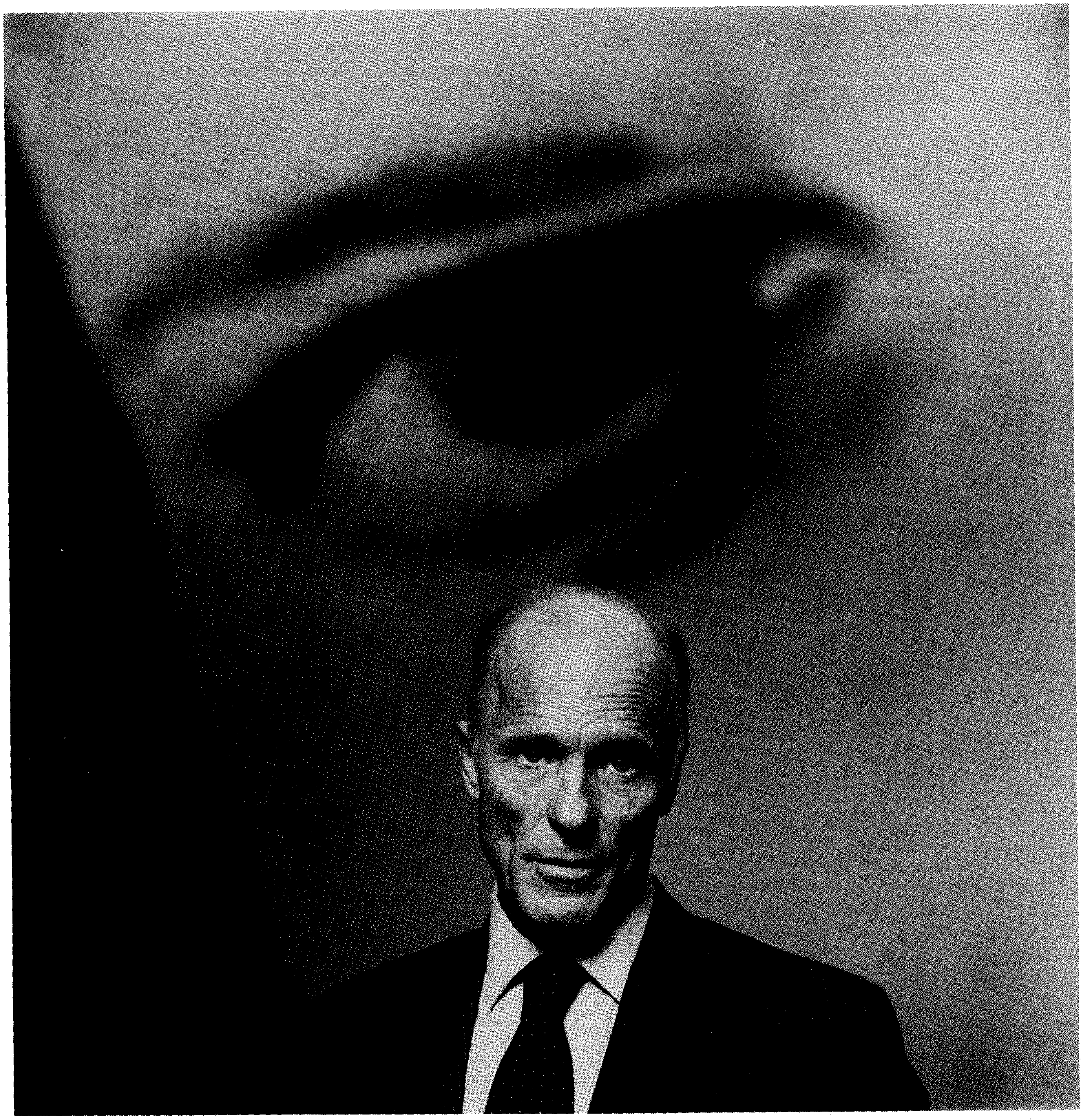
Like all poisoned chalices, Neil LaBute's "Wrecks" (directed by the playwright, at the Public) isn't what it seems. Before the lights go up on this superb and subversive monologue, the butterscotch sound of Nat King Cole's romantic anthems—"Stay As Sweet As You Are," "When I Fall in Love," "Stardust"—plays over a funeral scene. In a set subtly designed by Klara Zieglerova, a large black casket with a wreath of white flowers rests upstage, framed by an arch onto which is projected a gigantic blowup of a woman's face. (The same photograph rests on a table in front of the coffin.) Beyond the arch is another well-lit area, from which we occasionally hear the sounds of a milling crowd of mourners. The topography and the black-and-white design cunningly suggest the psychic division in the gaunt, chain-smoking widower Edward Carr (the compelling Ed Harris), who stands before us on the painted gray floor, taking drags on a cigarette and waving away the smoke screen before he speaks—a semaphore that, like everything else here, is emblematic of the self-destructiveness to come. Carr's first words are about the nature of habit: "Once you give yourself over to something, it's, well . . . it's a devil of a deal to beat it." Carr is talking about smoking; LaBute is not. The play is about self-deception; it is also, as its punning title implies, a retelling of Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex." In LaBute's story, however, Carr doesn't gouge out his eyes; he renders himself psychologically blind by cutting himself off from his feelings.

Carr tells us that he was an orphan, reared in a series of foster homes. Puffing away, he extolls his late wife of thirty years, Mary Jo, or Jo-Jo—recounting her beauty, the role he played in the breakup of her former marriage, the classic-car-rental business ("the little empire") that he and Jo-Jo built together, the safe harbor of their hard-won relationship. Almost casually he lets slip that he himself has only eight months to live. He seems curiously detached about his death, as well as about hers. "They're all crying now, sure," he says of the other mourners. "Why not? They got an audience. . . . Not me, though, no thank you." It was Jo-Jo, he adds, who taught him how to feel. "I do it in my own time, within the privacy of my own home." And he ponders the irony of Jo-Jo, who was fifteen years his senior, having died first. "Me smoking like a Christmas stove all my life, and she's the one who goes and gets cancer," he says.

Jo-Jo, the play suggests, was killed by a lifetime of Carr's secondhand smoke. Carr does not see this. Casting himself as a conservative straight shooter, a bit of a prude who doesn't even like to say the word "fuck," he shows us that he is pathologically unable to accept his own negative feelings. He claims that when he got the news of Jo-Jo's cancer, he felt, "I don't know, almost . . . elated." He continues, "Now I was certain that I'd be able to be there with her, every day, for the rest of her life." Carr has an almost herculean capacity for denial. He idealizes Jo-Jo, whom he refers to variously as "an absolute angel," a "goddess," "a pearl that fell to this planet like some tear outta the eye of almighty Christ himself." His words, which are meant to attest to a grand passion, reveal instead a passion of an altogether different kind: a passion for ignorance. The hatred he really feels for Jo-Jo and for himself is projected onto his cigarettes, which he calls, significantly, "insidious little pricks that deserve the hatred and fear we heap on 'em." He is not just smoking but also, rhetorically speaking, blowing smoke. "Just trying to be honest here," he tells us at the opening. "To be open. Vulnerable. In touch with your emotions, and, you know . . . all that other crap."

In a psychological sense, "Wrecks" is really a ghost story. Jo-Jo, Carr tells us, was haunted; she "spent . . . her free time regretting her life—first half of it anyway, before she met me—wishing it'd turned out differently." Carr, for his part, is haunted by what he cannot bear to acknowledge in himself, by all that he has had to reject in order to preserve a sense of his own goodness. Carr is split in more ways than one. "God, listen to me in there!" he says, glancing over his shoulder at the other room. "I sound like a complete ass, don't I?" he adds, apparently in two places at once. "I can hear myself going on like some sort of . . ." He never finishes his sentence; the audience, however, does: he is some sort of ghost, an absent presence. (Harris's bony, spectral features only underscore the point.) Later, he pauses once again when he hears himself speaking in the next room. "Listen to me there. I've got that sound going, I definitely do . . . a catch in my voice . . . listen," he says. The theatrical trope is bold and, at first, disconcerting; it telegraphs, nonetheless, something essential beneath Carr's rationalizations. He is depersonalized, an echo, a stranger to himself and to his internal world.

In "Oedipus Rex," the drama is about the search for self-awareness; in "Wrecks," the drama is about the lack of it. In "Oedipus Rex," the King is a victim of the caprice of the gods and is, therefore, tragic. In "Wrecks," the moral horror arises not by chance but by choice, and Carr is, therefore, evil. "I always knew she had a secret," Carr says. "My Mary Jo. I did. . . . I knew it because—well, maybe you're all a bunch smarter than I take you for—*I* was her secret." The nature of that secret is revealed to Jo-Jo only on her deathbed. As he describes the moment, Carr stops to observe, "It's just amazing what we do, as people, you know, to run from the past. . . . God, the *swamplands* we're willing to wade through to get around the truth!" Carr is an example of the very thing he inveighs against. He is mired in his own moral swamp. It says a lot for LaBute's skills that, when the truth finally comes out, we're poleaxed by it. Part of the surprise is due, of course, to Harris's own potent charm offensive, which keeps both the character and the audience from imagining the worst. Inevitably, given Carr's psychological profile, he comes up with a sincere justification for his actions, which is, at once, as awful and as implausibly hilarious as Jonathan Swift's suggestion for ending Ireland's famine in "A Modest Proposal." The power of "Wrecks" lies in its aftershocks; unnerving implications keep erupting in the mind long after



Ed Harris as Edward Carr, a widower with a herculean capacity for denial, in "Wrecks." Photograph by Steve Pyke.

the play is over. LaBute's play is not a glib exercise in negativity but a masterly attempt to shed light on the ways in which we manufacture our own darkness. It offers us the kind of illumination that Tom Stoppard has called "what's left of God's purpose when you take away God."

In "Wrecks," everything important lies between the lines. In George Bernard Shaw's "Heartbreak House" (now in a Roundabout Theatre production at the American Airlines, under the direction of Robin Lefevre), everything is *in* the lines, in Shaw's wordy rationality. Life in Captain Shotover's wacky, bohemian Edwardian household is supposed to be a comedy of bad manners, which Shaw subtitled "A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes." Heavy on bluff and bons mots ("One rock is as good as another to be wrecked on"), it is woefully light on narrative subtlety. Shaw's characters are puppets for his ideas; language pours out of them, but the point blurs.

The interior of the Captain's Sussex country home has been designed like the inside of a ship; the middle-class citizens who inhabit it are, it seems, adrift. The play, largely conceived before the First World War, prophesies the jolt to come. Although Philip Bosco, as Shotover, Swoosie Kurtz and Byron Jennings as his daughter and son-in-law, and especially Lily Rabe, as the visitor, Ellie Dunn, turn in lively performances, the comedy sinks under the weight of its own exposition. "Heartbreak House," which is about three hours long, feels like a luxury liner trying to dock. Unfortunately, for all the intelligence onstage, it can't find the right angle. ♦

DANCING

HARD AND FAST

What an Indian tradition can do for modern dance.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Globalization may have its downside, but it could do something for modern dance that a lot of people would appreciate; namely, restore musicality. Early this month, Pandit Birju Maharaj, the reigning guru of kathak—a dance form that grew up in the Hindu temples and the Mughal courts of northern India—gave a concert at the Peter Norton Symphony Space that may have been the most remarkable display of musical chops to hit the New York dance stage this year. Maharaj is sixty-eight, and he has slowed down. In this show, he was spelled by two disciples, Saswati Sen and Mahua Shankar. Nevertheless, he was soon demonstrating the advanced-math rhythms that kathak is famous for. He showed us how to lay a three-count foot-stamping phrase over a four-count musical phrase, and how to fit fives into sixteens. Saswati Sen did a dance to a count of nine and a half, a feat few people would have dreamed of. She accomplished it by taking some of the beats at double speed, and that is something else about kathak: how fast it gets, with no sacrifice of clarity. The dancer may be spinning like a rotary blade, but, from second to second, the head and arms are making exactly this shape, then exactly that. You can't believe it—that so many different things are coming out of one source. And that's not to speak of the mime dances, usually based on Hindu mythology, that are done in alternation with the rhythm studies. In these routines, the kathak performer often plays several characters. In a tale from the Ramayana, Sen was now a virtuous wife, now the god who seduced her, now the enraged husband, and also the river flowing by. Kathak is probably at least eight hundred years old, and in that time it has developed extraordinary subtlety.

Occasionally, for this reason, it is confounding. Maybe a jazz musician could have counted out Sen's nine-and-a-half-beat phrase, but I couldn't. Likewise with the stories. That milkmaid Maharaj portrayed at one point: what was she doing, so interestingly, with her hands? Petting a dog? Making dinner? Because kathak is such a perfect, specific flower of Indian history and religion, it looks foreign, like Kabuki, and therefore it might seem that, despite the large Indian populations living in Western capitals, this form could have no effect on Western dancing. You can't just pick it up. People say that it takes six years to learn.

The London-based choreographer Akram Khan has worked to adapt the kathak form. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

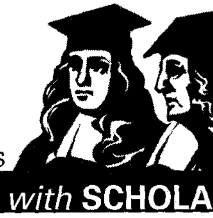
But you can now learn it in the West. Akram Khan, currently the most bankable British choreographer on the international dance scene, is, artistically, the grandson of Birju Maharaj. Born in London, of Bangladeshi parents, in 1974, he was taken by his mother at the age of seven to that city's Academy of Indian Dance, where he studied with a famous kathak master, Sri Pratap Pawar, who was trained in India by Maharaj. Until he was twenty, he says, kathak, together with music videos (he adored Michael Jackson), was all he knew. He had no idea that there was such a thing as "modern dance." Then he went to college, where he studied Martha Graham's technique and Merce Cunningham's, and he came out jumbled. He started choreographing in the late nineties, and his style, he told an interviewer, was "eighty percent kathak and twenty percent modern dance."

You could see that in "Kaash" (2002), his first evening-length piece, which he brought to New York in 2003. This was kathak, but shorn of most of the elements that make it seem exotic. Gone was the Indian garb and the eyeliner and the ankle bells. Gone were the mime dances and, with them, the thing that most makes Indian dance look strange to us, its "facialism": the rolling eyes, the fluttering eyebrows, the coy looks and pleading looks and angry looks. This facial acting is a whole art in itself, highly stylized, and it is part of the pride of kathak, but to untrained Western audiences—and possibly also to a young Anglo-Bangladeshi growing up in London in the eighties and nineties—it can look like silent-movie acting.

So Khan got rid of the plummy parts, and he hung on to the steely parts, the rhythms. Furthermore, he transferred them to his ensemble. Kathak is traditionally performed solo, but in "Kaash" Khan had five dancers doing the fancy rhythmic combinations. More than that, he made the mathematics visual as well as audial. Again and again, in a line of dancers working in unison, one would peel off, start doing something else, in counterpoint to the others, and thus introduce the seed of change. The resulting dances looked like some biological process glimpsed through a lab microscope—cell division, maybe—where first you have unity, then disturbance and metamorphosis. Another element of kathak that Khan kept was virtuosity. He himself is a firecracker of a dancer—small, tight-strung, but quick and wild. "Kaash"'s ensemble was just as impressive. Khan had taught the dancers kathak, not for six years, obviously, but long enough. They acted as though they had been doing this dance forever.

And narrative? Earlier this year, Khan—speaking, I believe, for all dancers rooted in what was once called the Third World—told Claudia La Rocco, of the *Times*, that every dance he did was narrative: "I don't believe in the word 'abstract,' in what I do." To another interviewer he said that "Kaash" had a big story, combining modern physics with ancient Hinduism: it was about Shiva, the creator-destroyer god, seen as "a black hole in space that sucks everything in—light, matter, sound." "Kaash" is Hindi for "if." Presumably, the title refers to the indeterminacy of Shiva's universe.

I don't quite buy this explanation, or, rather, I see it as background. Choreographers often start a piece with a story in mind and then create a dance in which the story is completely absorbed, becoming a mood rather than a narrative. "Kaash" had a sinister feel to it. There was a solo for a woman who seemed like a wounded insect trying to find its legs. There was also a tense, erotic duet for Khan and a woman (big, strong, excellent Moya Michael) in which he covered her eyes with his hand, blinding her. But nobody talked about Shiva, or anything else. The piece was abstract, and it looked like modern dance. For many years, modern-dance choreographers have been making good use of African dance—which is not hard, since it is so much a part of our culture—but adaptations of Asian dance tend to look like dress-up: Barbie goes to an ashram. Khan, because kathak is native, not foreign, to him, was able to beat the odds. Last spring, three years after the New York première of "Kaash," he brought us "Ma" (2004). This dance did have an overt story—indeed, a text by the novelist Hanif Kureishi—about Mother Earth, which is what "ma" means. But, as in "Kaash," the soul of the piece was rhythmic dancing. These two works, both set to Indian-inspired scores ("Kaash"'s by Nitin Sawhney, "Ma"'s mostly by Riccardo Nova), are the



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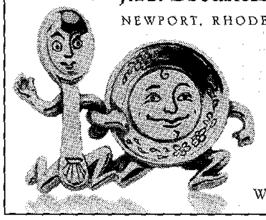

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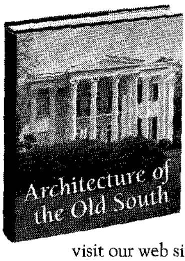

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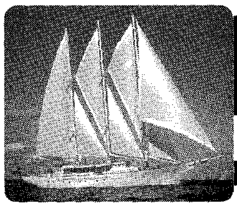

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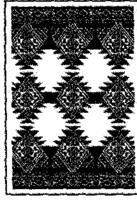

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only really successful fusions of modern dance with Indian dance that I have ever seen.

This month, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, as part of a celebration of the seventieth birthday of Steve Reich, Khan showed a new piece, "Variations for Vibes, Pianos, and Strings," to a Reich composition of the same name, and it was a surprise, because it was less kathak-based, less rhythm-driven, than anything else we have seen by him. It was a trio for three men—Khan; Young Jin Kim, a Korean; and Gregory Maqoma, a South African—and it had two themes. One was multiculturalism, as embodied by the three dancers (and Reich's music). The other was the unity of dance and music. As the curtain rose, we beheld the London Sinfonietta ranged on two sides of the stage—violins, violas, cellos, pianos, vibraphones, plus the conductor, Alan Pierson. It was just an orchestra, but, displayed in that way, like a set, it was a heart-stopping sight, the cellos gleaming, the vibraphones winking at the lights. Khan was saying how beautiful music is, and how dance is nothing without it. But, as the piece progressed, it turned out that this was all he was going to say. The dancers did solos, duets, and trios, but eventually they gave up on that and began conducting the orchestra, along with Pierson. Kathak, with its rhythmic meditations, was nowhere in evidence. I think I know why. Given the multiculturalism theme and its casting consequences—three virtuoso dancers, from three different lands—Khan could not impose his own style. On the other hand, that style is his language. Without it, he didn't have any ideas.

I hope this isn't a sign of things to come. Khan has told the press that he is now taking time off from his company. He's been making a series of duets for himself and other star performers, such as Juliette Binoche (a dance-theatre piece) and the ballerina Sylvie Guillem. This project may be, in part, a product of exhaustion. After "Kaash," Khan became famous very fast. He was covered with honors—he got an M.B.E. last year—and invited everywhere. To directors of dance festivals, there is nothing more attractive these days than a talented choreographer of bicultural origin. Khan recently said that for the past few years he has been touring ten months a year—a punishing schedule. If, as a result, he is now doing side jobs, that is understandable. It's easier than running a company.

But, without a company, Khan will not be able to go on exploring kathak, and that would be a terrible loss. "Kaash" may have looked like modern dance, but in one sense it departed from the main line of that tradition: it was musical. Modern dance arose partly in opposition to ballet, and one of the fripperies of ballet that some early modern dancers were determined to throw off was subservience to music. We tend to locate modern dance's split with music in the nineteen-sixties, with Judson Dance Theatre, but it began early in the century, and it hasn't gone away. In every downtown dance venue, on every Saturday night, you can see performers doing just about anything except moving to a beat. But audiences are hungry for musical dancing, and they have found it, usually in other kinds of dance—in ballet, for example. Utterly empty ballets will often be frenetically applauded if they are performed to a rousing beat. A better example is "ethnic" dance. Why is the cheesy Riverdance such a hit? Why does the New York Flamenco Festival sell out? Because their shows are exciting musically. To come back to modern dance, what makes Mark Morris so popular? Why are the works of Ronald K. Brown the main draw of the Alvin Ailey company's recent repertory? Partly because both men have taken their inspiration from music-bound ethnic forms—African dance in Brown's case, Balkan dance and flamenco in Morris's. As populations go on moving from Asia and Africa to Europe and America, this revival of musicality in modern dance will continue. I hope Khan will be part of it. That is, I hope he gets back to kathak soon. ♦

DON'T GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT DEPARTMENT

From the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch.

The first sentence of the cover story in today's YOUR sections should read, "Preparing for a funeral is not a happy occasion." The word "not" was inadvertently dropped. The Times-Dispatch regrets any discomfort it may have caused anyone suffering through the loss of a loved one.

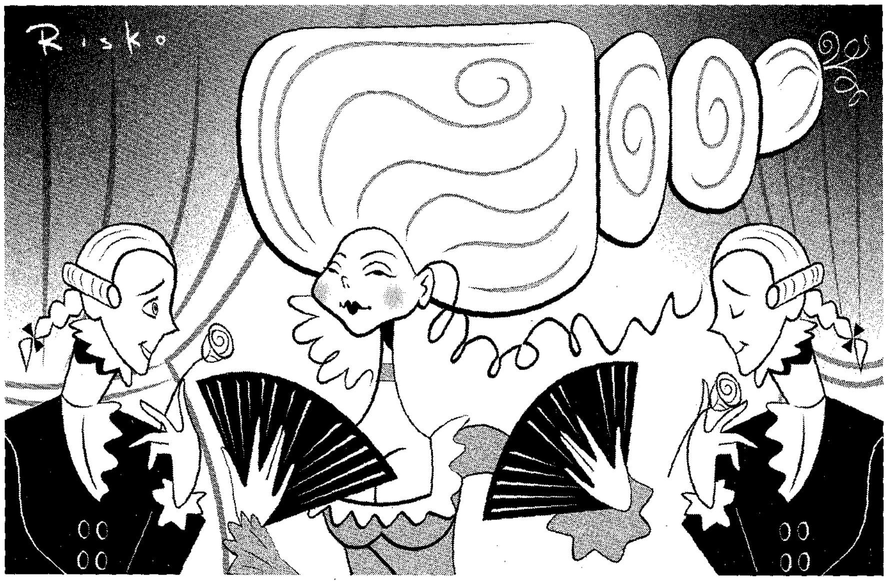
THE CURRENT CINEMA

LOST IN THE REVOLUTION

"Marie Antoinette" and "Infamous."

BY ANTHONY LANE

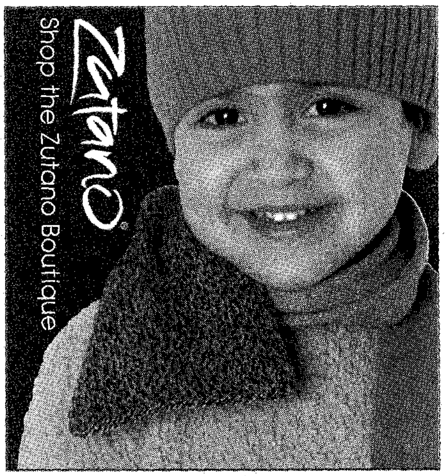
In May of this year, word came through of an unruly mob in France. "Did you hear what happened?" a friend asked me. "Marie Antoinette got heckled. Absolutely slaughtered." This was news? The last time I checked, she got heckled from the neck up more than two hundred years ago. After a while, the confusion lifted. We were talking about the Cannes Film Festival, where Sofia Coppola's film about the life of the late Queen, starring Kirsten Dunst, had been met with a trumpet blast of boos. Needless to say, my desire to watch the movie was doubled at a stroke. Anything that rattles the ashtrays of French film critics has got to be seen.



Kirsten Dunst as the French Queen, in Sofia Coppola's movie.

The first intimation that "Marie Antoinette" will not cleave to the habits of other period dramas comes in the opening credits, which roll to the sound of "Natural's Not in It," by the Gang of Four. That title more or less covers the world of the movie, in which regular human conduct—everything from choosing whom you marry to getting dressed in the morning—is torn from your control and codified to death. We start with the teen-aged Austrian princess arriving at the French border, in 1770, as the prospective bride of Louis, the Dauphin of France (Jason Schwartzman). She enters a tented pavilion, pitched in autumnal woods; it might as well be made from candy canes and gingerbread. It even has a resident witch, the Comtesse de Noailles (Judy Davis), whose place at the head of the welcoming party is compromised by the fact that, after years at the French court, she is about as welcoming as a frozen hedgehog. Marie, schooled in warmth, greets the Comtesse with something called a hug. Worse still, she goes on to console her Austrian entourage, from whom she must now take her leave, with a *group* hug. To the Comtesse and her posse, all this seems not so much shocking as incomprehensible. You might as well ask them to hip-hop.

The scene sets a pattern for the rest of the film. Our heroine finds the existence of the rich and royal, in pre-Revolutionary France, to be starched beyond all tolerance; over time, she exerts a softening, not to say trivializ-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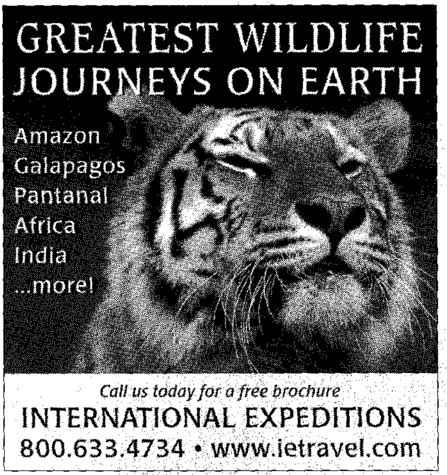
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ing, influence, and that, in turn, is one of the factors that hasten the Revolution's rush. Certainly the trivia on show here would be more than enough to enrage the malnourished masses. We get wigs that look like desserts, cookies that look like jewels, and shoes—designed for the film by Manolo Blahnik—that appear to have been stitched together at night by the world's most sophisticated elves. There is one pair of fur-lined slippers into which even Freud would blush to insert his toes.

If Marie Antoinette throws herself into footwear, so to speak, that may be because, elsewhere in life, she lacks the satisfaction of a snug fit. Her sole duty is to provide the Dauphin with a male heir, a task made more urgent when he ascends the throne, his rambunctious old goat of a father (Rip Torn) having died from smallpox. (This being a glamour-conscious picture, there is no sign of anything as gross as actual pox—I mean, *eeewww.*) The Dauphin, however, is a tidy dullard whose only pleasure is the study of locks and keys; again, the symbolism is hardly tucked away in a drawer. One night in Paris, the Queen, as she now is, attends a masked ball, her features utterly disguised by a thin strip of transparent black gauze. There, at last, she meets someone with the right-sized key: Count Fersen (Jamie Dornan), a leering Swede, and, if this film is to be believed, father to the sovereign bloodline of France.

But is this film to be believed? Manolo Blahnik, with his precise grip on fantasy, seems to be the only person to have recognized the project for the confection that it is. Coppola films Versailles with a flat acceptance, quickening at times into eager montage, and declares, in her notes on the film, that she sought to capture her heroine's "inner experience." Her what? This is like a manicurist claiming to capture the inner experience of your pinkie. The one, transfixing virtue of "Marie Antoinette" is its unembarrassed devotion to the superficial. There is no morality at play here, no agony other than boredom, and, until the last half hour, not a shred of political sense. The fun dies out of the film—in fact, the film itself expires—when Coppola suddenly starts dragging in discussions of the American Revolution and, at the close, a baying crowd with a hatred of chandeliers. I can see what the director was after here: the kind of irruptive shock that cuts short the jamboree in "Love's Labor's Lost." But horrified realism is not her style, and her lunges at historical gravity seem insulting and uncourageous; she should have kept her nerve and stuck to the fripperies—to the noisy, brightly decorated void in which her characters spin.

The question has to be: what does Coppola know? Was "Lost in Translation" really, as it first appeared, a wistful commentary on the plight of Americans abroad, who shut themselves in their hotel rooms and fell lightly in love because it was sweeter, and less scary, than venturing outside? Or was it, as a later viewing suggested, in hock to that same trepidation, creating an insular chic out of xenophobia? A similar uncertainty pervades "Marie Antoinette," borne along on a wave of anachronistic rock. Is the movie somehow contending that the Queen was, with her gang of cronies and her witless overspends, the Paris Hilton of the late eighteenth century? If so, then the catcallers of Cannes were even more misguided than they knew, since any decent French Marxist would be happy to deconstruct the film as a trashing of the idle rich.

On the other hand, I spent long periods of "Marie Antoinette" under the growing illusion that it was actually made by Paris Hilton. The exploits of Madame du Barry (Asia Argento), the old King's mistress, are unpeeled with a schoolgirl's sneer. "That is *so* Du Barry," one of Marie's pals says. Snuff is snorted like coke. There are hilarious attempts at landscape, but the fountains and parterres of Versailles are grabbed by the camera and pasted into the action, as if the whole thing were being shot on a cell phone and sent to friends. The young Queen builds a faux-pastoral paradise in the grounds, where she and her little daughter sport like shepherdesses, but, rather than raise an eyebrow at this make-believe, the director treats it as just another white-linen moment, like an outtake from "The Virgin Suicides," and, for good measure, tosses in a few shots of nodding flowers and ickle bouncy lambs. That is *so* Coppola. It is hard to hate the film, whose silly fizz makes it simpler and less creepy than her earlier projects. If it does drop larger hints, they have less to do with the vanished culture of Versailles than with the fretful stasis of our own. The movie's approach to the world beyond, to everything that one doesn't know or wouldn't care to buy, is like the look on Kirsten Dunst's face: a beautiful blankness, forever on the brink of drifting, with a smile, into sleep.

The first thing to say about "Infamous" is that you should not *not* see it. The people who went to last year's "Capote," which trod the same ground, may well be tempted to skip Douglas McGrath's take on the savage events of 1959 that led to the publication, six years later, of "In Cold Blood." There are definite family resemblances between the two films (in each case, we see a robed Truman Capote lounging in his New York apartment and spotting a piece in the *Times* about a multiple slaying in Kansas), but they are, at the closest, first cousins. The earlier movie was glowering, patient, and dour, as if everything else had made way for the brilliance of Philip Seymour Hoffman in the title role. The new work feels more populous and poised. Jeff Daniels, for instance, assumes the role of the investigating detective, played last year by Chris Cooper; both are wonderful actors, but Daniels makes the bigger impression, because he gets more room to breathe.

The part of Capote goes to the British actor Toby Jones, who bears the distinction of looking exactly like him. I didn't know that *anyone* looked like Capote, barring a couple of tree frogs in the Amazon delta, but I am happy to stand corrected. Jones gets everything—the gestures, the generosity, the mean streak, the bending of the ear to recitals of woe, whether across a lunch table or a prison cell. He even nails the voice, like that of a chorister caught running a racket with the incense. Not that his Capote comes off as a party piece; he is more of a puckish observer, tracing the travails in which others ensnare themselves. He has much to observe: Sigourney Weaver, Hope Davis, and Isabella Rossellini as his enchanted ladies in New York; Daniel Craig, meaty with threat and self-delusion in the role of the senior murderer; and Sandra Bullock, picking up where Catherine Keener left off in the role of Harper Lee. (Both performances left me absolutely convinced that it was Lee, not Capote, who was the pivot and enigma of the whole, improbable episode; but that is another story.) Strangest of all is a scene at the beginning, in which Gwyneth Paltrow, forlorn in gold, croons a Cole Porter number. We hear no further reference to her or the song, and yet she sets the mood—showy but baffled, cheerful but primed for heartbreak—that glitters throughout the film. There is warmth in the coldest blood. ♦

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Volume LXXXII, No. 34, October 23, 2006. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: Jan. 23 & 30, Feb. 13 & 20, July 10 & 17, Aug. 7 & 14, Dec. 25 & Jan. 1) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Louis Cona, vice-president and publisher; Jamie Engel, associate publisher; Alatia Bradley, advertising director; Karen Quinn-Panzer, advertising director; Judy Safir, director of finance and business operations; Daniella Wells, executive director marketing & strategic planning; Janine Silvera, executive director of creative services; Jacqueline Cinguina, director of integrated marketing; Steve Porter, creative director/advertising; Ellen Reid, creative services director; Edward Klaris, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.E.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.O.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate; Maurie Perl, senior vice-president–chief communications officer. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: Steven T. Florio, Advance Magazine Group vice chairman; David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

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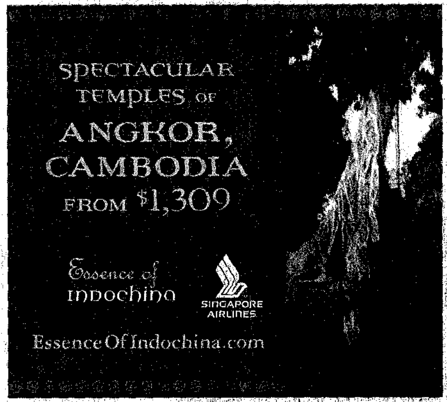

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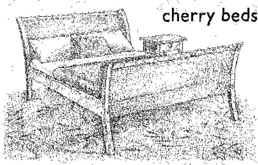
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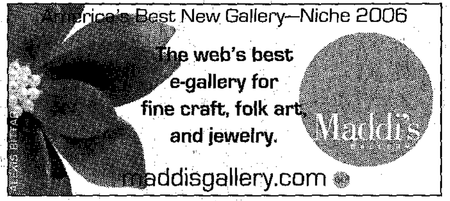

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Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Harry Bliss, must be received by Sunday, October 22nd. Finalists in the October 9th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 6th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

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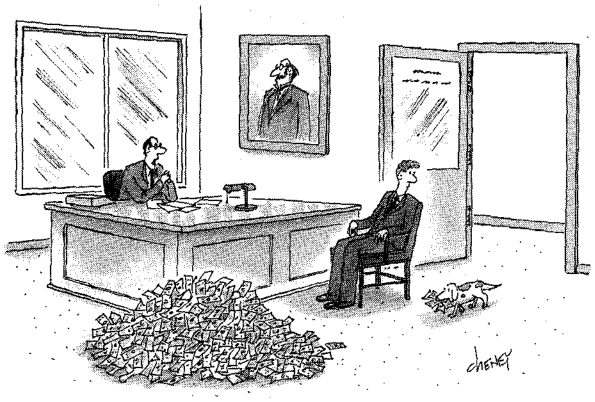
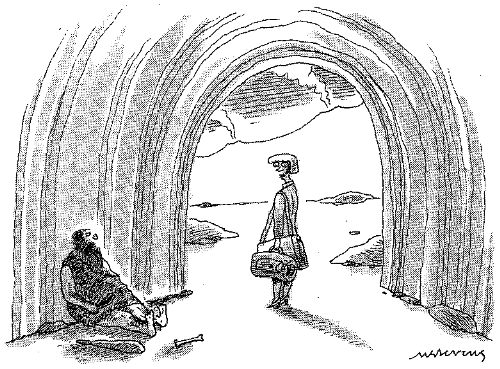


"Don't laugh. He's made partner."
Jim Dickerson, Richmond, Va.



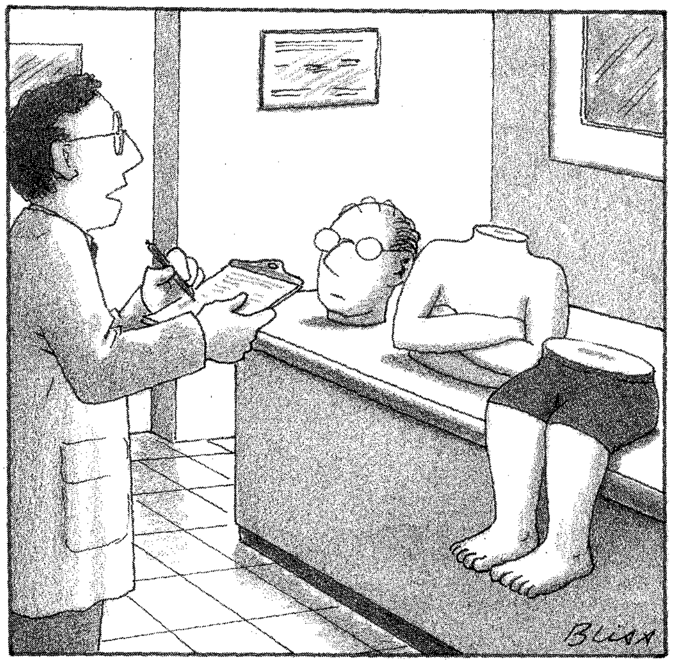
THE FINALISTS

"I want to meet different kinds of Man."
Burton Hanson, Edina, Minn.

"The fire went out."
Donald Barr, Charlotte, N.C.

"It's not just that he walks upright and uses complex tools. He also makes me laugh."
Andy Sapora, Union City, N.J.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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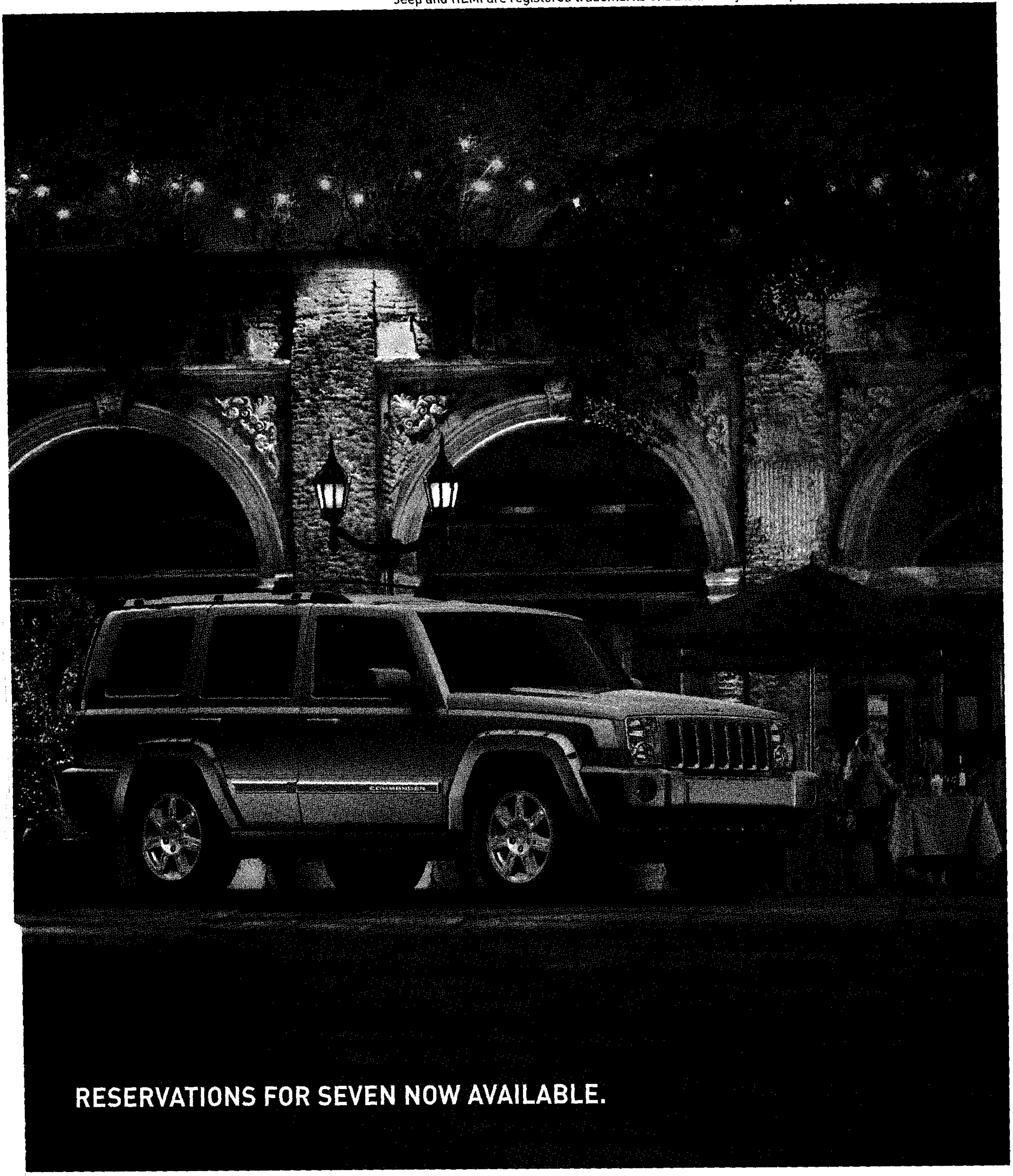
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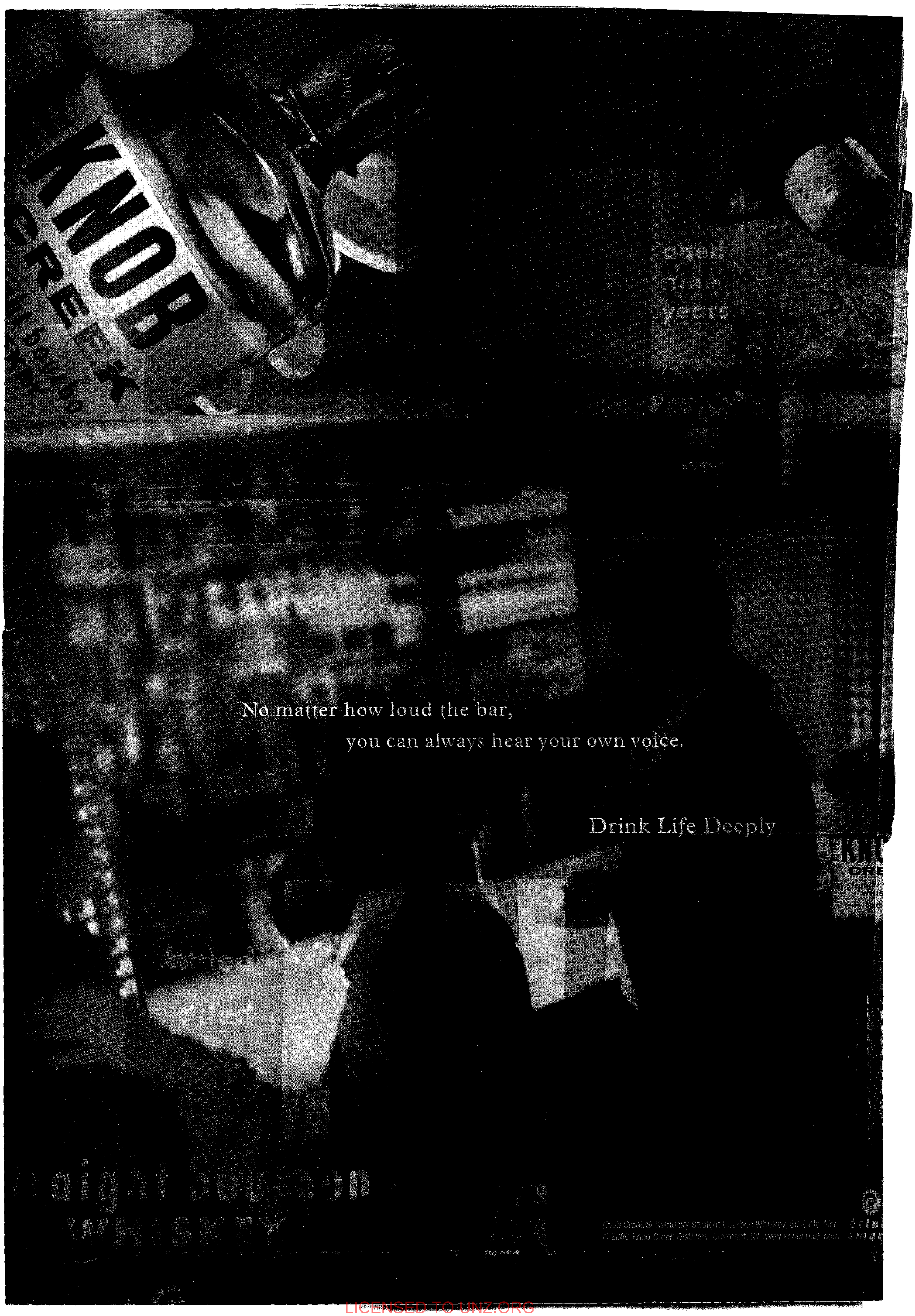
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